SPORTS / A29

Marquez dethrones Barrera, wants big-money fight with Pacquiao

BUSINESS / B1

Manila Water to cut rates starting next month; strong peso cited

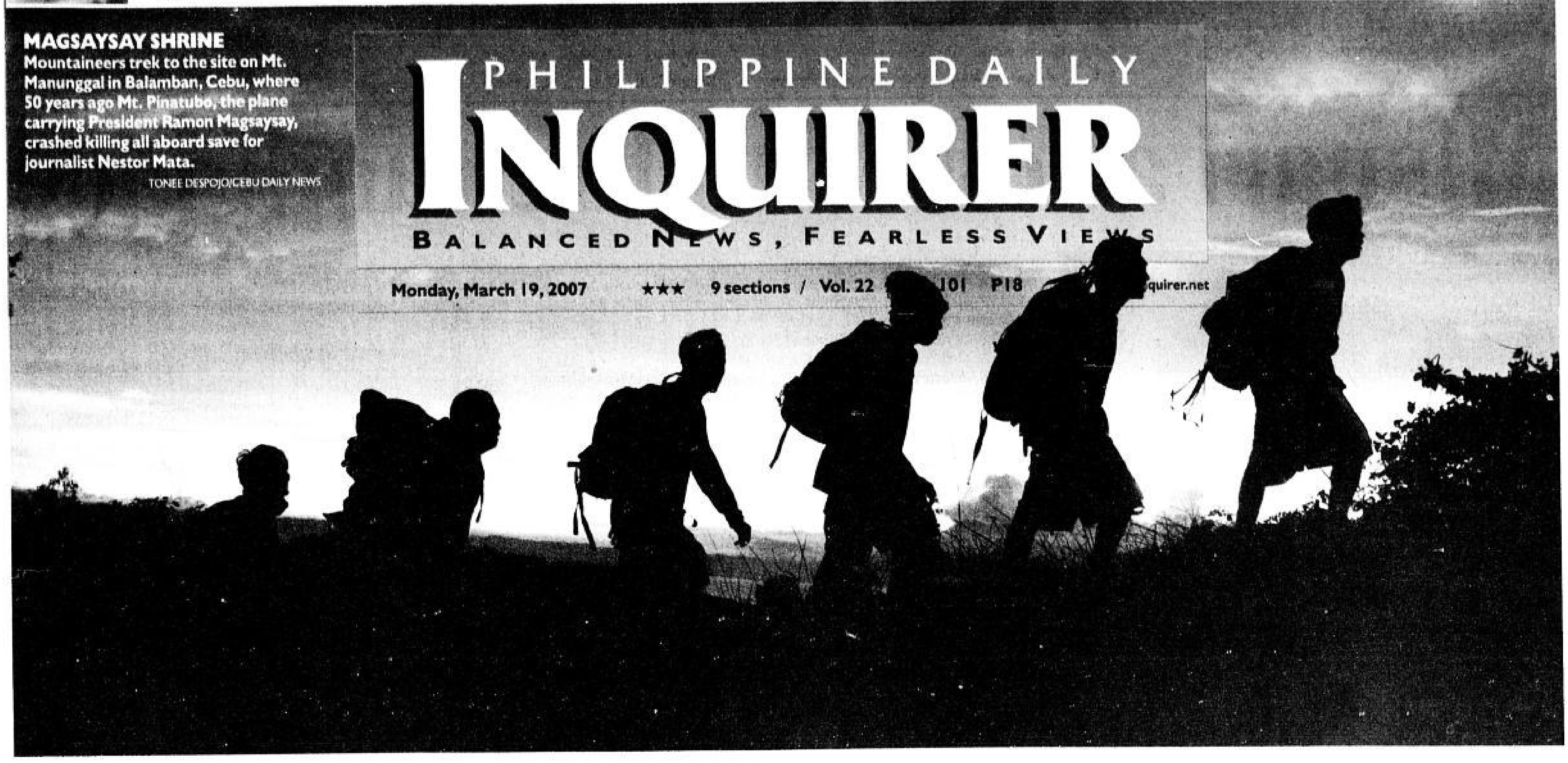
ACROSS / A21

6 ARMM provinces in Comelec list of election hot spots

NEWS / A2

Court lets Misuari fly to Jolo to file candidacy for gov

PHILIPPINE DAILY
INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS
Monday, March 19, 2007 ★★★ 9 sections / Vol. 22 101 P18 quirer.net



MAGSAYSAY SHRINE
Mountaineers trek to the site on Mt. Manunggal in Balamban, Cebu, where 50 years ago Mt. Pinatubo, the plane carrying President Ramon Magsaysay, crashed killing all aboard save for journalist Nestor Mata.
TONEE DESPOJO/CEBU DAILY NEWS

Joker: Let's go slow in condemning AFP

'Only some in military responsible for killings'

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

ILOILO CITY—REELECTIONIST SEN. JOKER ARroyo is urging the public to go slow in condemning the entire military for the unusually high number of unresolved killings of militants under President Macapagal-Arroyo's administration.

In a press conference of the Team Unity candidates at the Sarabia Hotel here yesterday, Arroyo said the soldiers had, on the whole, remained "loyal" to the state and "faithful" to their duty of laying down their lives for their country.

"There might be some in the military (who are responsible for the killings) but certainly not all. That is what is contained in the Melo report which stated that only certain elements and not the entire force are guilty," he said, referring to the investigation conducted last year by a commission headed by retired Supreme Court Associate Justice Jose Melo.

"How can we condemn our soldiers who are willing to die for us? We condemn the killings but we should not condemn the entire AFP."

Arroyo pointed out that if the military had not been loyal to democratic ideals, the country would have easily fallen to a military junta in February last year when a faction of officers and soldiers plotted to oust the President.

The senator said military rule would have been "worse" for the country because the soldiers could have done anything they wanted under a junta.

"What would have happened

JOKER/ A6

PNP delays transfer of Satur to Leyte

By Alcuin Papa and Allison W. Lopez *in Manila* **and Vincent Cabreza**
Inquirer Northern Luzon

PHILIPPINE NATIONAL POLICE Director General Oscar Calderon said last night he was giving Bayan Muna Rep. Satur Ocampo time to seek a court order deferring his imminent transfer to a Leyte jail.

Calderon's statement came after airport and police sources told the INQUIRER they had received information that Ocampo was to be flown to Tacloban City this morning so he could appear before a court in Hilongos, Leyte, where he is facing multiple murder charges.

"There is a request to give (him) enough time to make an appeal [to defer his transfer]," Calderon told the INQUIRER.

Pressed on when the PNP would present the leftist lawmaker to the Leyte court which had ordered his arrest, Calderon said: "At the latest Tuesday morning. Maybe Monday afternoon."

Ocampo has been charged with multiple murder in the sala of Hilongos Judge Ephrem Abando in connection with the discovery in Leyte of a supposed mass grave of military spies allegedly killed by communist rebels in the 1980s.

Ocampo, who is currently de-

PNP DELAYS/ A12

3 Filipino women off to Everest

By Tarra Quismundo

IN THEIR BACKPACKS ARE mountain gear, winter clothes and prayers.

Out to prove that the Filipino woman can do it, the trio of Carina Dayondon, Janet Belarmino and Noelle Wenceslao yesterday flew to Thailand en route to Nepal for the most challenging expedition of their lives—to climb the 29,035-foot Mount Everest, the world's tallest peak.

"*Kaya ng Pinay. Hindi tayo pahuhuli. Pwede tayo makasabay* (The Pinay can do it. We won't be left behind. We will be with the rest of them)," the 28-year-old Belarmino said.

"We may be different from men, but we are equal."

Wenceslao, 27, sounded equally confident in a talk with the IN-

3 FILIPINO/ A20

JANET Belarmino (left), Noelle Wenceslao (center) and Carina Dayondon pose before their departure at the Naia. RUDY ESPERAS

Cut in $360-M US assistance to RP looms

By Amando Doronila

ANALYSIS

A US SENATE INQUIRY LAST week into the wave of extrajudicial killings in the Philippines sent the strongest signal so far to President Macapagal-Arroyo to leash her security forces or face a possible slash in the $360-million aid to her counterinsurgency campaign.

The warning became crystal clear at the hearing of the Senate subcommittee on East Asian and Pacific affairs chaired by Democratic Sen. Barbara Boxer. It came from both Boxer in the Democratic-controlled Congress and state department senior officials, as well as former US Embassy diplomats in Manila, who testified at the hearing.

From the tone of the testimonies, it would be disastrous for the Arroyo administration to dismiss lightly the warning and to delude itself into believing that the US government is not serious about its concern over the Philippine killings.

The hearing highlighted testimonies that:

- Ms Arroyo was not doing enough to hold military authorities responsible for the killings accountable.
- She was being held hostage

CUT IN/ A20

Top PMA grad offers Navy cap to father

By Vincent Cabreza
Inquirer Northern Luzon

BAGUIO CITY—IT WAS ONE OF Andrelee Mojica's proudest moments, but a moment tinged with sadness.

On Friday, for the first time, the cadet first class and valedictorian of this year's Philippine Military Academy graduating class wore a Navy cap to mark a special luncheon tendered for 73 future naval officers from the PMA "Maragtas" Class of 2007.

Navy chief Vice Admiral Rogelio Calunsag honored the graduating cadets by turning over to Mojica her first ensign's uniform and a ceremonial saber—symbolic of her topping this year's class of future naval officers.

Calunsag also handed over to the cadets their first paychecks for P17,000 each.

It was a moment of joy.

TOP PMA/ A19

VINCENT CABREZA/INQUIRER NORTHERN LUZON

LIGAYA Mojica dons a Navy cap that will soon be worn by her daughter, Cadet First Class Andrelee Mojica.

US airline employs chief apology officer

DALLAS, TEXAS—AIRLINES are getting serious about saying they're sorry.

After a spate of nightmarish service disruptions, American Airlines, JetBlue Airways and others are sending out more apologies, hoping to head off customer complaints and quell talk of new consumer protec-

US AIRLINE/ A8

AKO SI "MR. SORRY!"

Botika ng Bayan sells cheaper drugs

By Amy R. Remo

SEVENTY-ONE-YEAR-OLD GLOria Silverio doesn't mind walking a good 10 to 15 minutes to get to a drugstore to buy medicines for herself and her husband.

Although she can take a tricycle or, better yet, go to another drugstore nearer her house, she prefers this one on Roosevelt Avenue in Quezon City, as it sells cheaper medicines.

"I would rather endure the long walk because the medicines there are cheaper. Every peso counts," said Silverio in Filipino. She takes Euglocon once a day for her diabetes.

Silverio's "*suki*" drugstore, Coops for Christ, is a Botika ng

BOTIKA/ A19

EZ2
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Second FrontPage

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WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: Luzon will have mostly cloudy skies with scattered rainshowers while Mindanao and Eastern Visayas will have mostly cloudy skies with scattered rainshowers and thunderstorms. The rest of the country will be cloudy with isolated rainshowers.

Metro Manila	Cloudy with Rains	Iloilo/Bacolod	Partly Cloudy
Baguio	Cloudy with Rains	Roxas	Partly Cloudy
Tuguegarao	Cloudy with Rains	Cebu	Cloudy with Rains
Laoag	Cloudy with Rains	Tacloban	Cloudy with Rains
Clark Zone	Cloudy with Rains	Gen. Santos	Cloudy with Rains
Tagaytay	Cloudy with Rains	Zamboanga	Cloudy with Rains
Legazpi	Cloudy with Rains	Cagayan de Oro	Cloudy with Rains
Calapan	Cloudy with Rains	Davao	Cloudy with Rains

COMPILED BY: KATE PEDROSO, INQUIRER RESEARCH/03/18/07 SOURCE: PAGASA

Misuari allowed to file candidacy

By DJ Yap

DETAINED MORO rebel leader Nur Misuari will fly to Mindanao tomorrow to file his certificate of candidacy for Sulu governor after a Makati court granted his request to travel, his lawyer said yesterday.

JOSEPH E. ASSAD/CONTRIBUTOR

MISUARI

Judge Winlove Dumayas of Makati Regional Trial Court Branch 59 allowed Misuari to personally submit his certificate of candidacy to the Commission on Elections office in Jolo, lawyer Ombra Jainal said.

"He will be on the first flight to Zamboanga on March 20. All the arrangements are ready," Jainal told the INQUIRER by phone. "But he will return to Manila on the same day."

The lawyer said he received the order allowing Misuari to travel on Friday.

"This will have no bearing on his case," Jainal said, adding that the rebellion charge, now under reinvestigation by the Department of Justice, would be dismissed soon.

"If this was not a political case, this would have been dismissed a long time ago," he said. "What I know is the case is very weak. It will be dismissed anytime. We're just waiting for the resolution."

Misuari faces rebellion charges in connection with an uprising by his followers in Jolo in November 2001.

He has been under house arrest since mid-2006 in New Manila, Quezon City, near St. Luke's Medical Center, where he was previously taken after complaining of various ailments, including hypertension.

Asked how Misuari, who was allowed to fly to Jolo to register as a voter last December, intended to campaign while in detention, Jainal said: "He does not need to campaign. He will win."

On the coming tripartite peace talks scheduled in July in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, the lawyer expressed confidence that Misuari would be allowed to attend as head of the delegation of the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF).

"If he's not there, there will be no tripartite talks. He'll be allowed to go," Jainal said.

The MNLF was founded by Misuari in the early '70s with the intention of creating an independent Moro nation.

In 1996, Misuari signed a peace accord with then President Fidel Ramos, ending one of the longest-running insurgencies in Southeast Asia.

Misuari became governor of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) but was removed five years later by his own followers for mismanagement and abuse of power.

In 2001, Misuari led a rebellion against the government. The rebellion, which resulted in the deaths of some 100 people, was put down and Misuari fled to Malaysia, where he was arrested.

He has been in detention since then awaiting trial.

Today, the government is negotiating a peace accord with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), which broke away from the MNLF when the ARMM was formed, claiming the agreement did not give the Moro people full autonomy.

The MILF has had a ceasefire with the government for three years but talks have stalled over the issue of ancestral domain—land over which the Moro people claim ownership. *With an AFP report*

'Blank ballots help lousy bets'

By Christian V. Esguerra

APPARENTLY DISMAYED BY THE choices available, the average Filipino voter fills up only seven of the 12 slots for senatorial candidates on his ballot, according to Guillermo "Bill" Luz, former secretary general of the National Citizens Movement for Free Elections (Namfrel).

This practice, Luz said, may actually increase the chances of winning of the very candidates the voter didn't want elected in the first place.

Luz thus urged voters to fill all the blanks on their ballots.

"Elections are based on rank, not on a fixed number," he told the INQUIRER in an interview. "By abstaining, you're making it easier for other people to enter the Magic 12."

Luz, also a former executive director of the Makati Business Club, is busy nowadays with a quiet campaign to prepare and educate voters ahead of the May congressional and local elections.

"I think the challenge is to consider a wider range of candidates," he said. "Don't limit your choices to those off the top of your head. We have to be open-minded and not just look at the usual cast of characters but also at the smaller, independent ones," he said.

Brainstorm with kin, friends

In order to come up with enough names to fill up the ballot, Luz said families or groups of friends could "brainstorm" on particular candidates and their platforms, and be ready with a list come election day. This way, people could actually make a difference, albeit small, in the democratic exercise, he said.

Luz suggested a similar strategy in choosing party-list representatives whose slots in ballots are also often marked with an abstention.

Since a voter is allowed to choose only one party-list organization, abstention would increase other groups' chances of making it to the House of Representatives, he said.

Luz said the competition would be naturally tough if, say, a total of 35 million registered voters actually casts their ballots. Since a party-list group needs only two percent of the votes to earn a seat, it would have to garner at least 700,000 votes.

But if, for instance, only 10 million of the total number of registered voters cast a ballot for a party-list organization, a group would only need 200,000 votes to win, he said.

On silver platter

"So people are actually giving other party-list groups a mandate on a silver platter," he added.

Luz said it wasn't really hard to choose which party-list organization to vote for. He said the key was to choose a sector a voter deems important then pick from among the groups competing in that sector for a seat in Congress.

FPJ party-list group urging Susan, daughter to run

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.
and Bayani San Diego Jr.

ALTHOUGH SHE TURNED DOWN AN OFFER from the opposition to run on its senatorial slate, actress Susan Roces is now being drafted as a nominee of the party-list group which bears the initials of her late husband Fernando Poe Jr.—FPJPM

FPJPM, initially formed to support the 2004 presidential bid of Poe against President Macapagal-Arroyo, has reconstituted itself into the Filipinos for Peace, Justice and Progress Movement and will hold a press conference today to announce its nominees as it vies for a seat in the House of Representatives.

"Although my mom has already stated she does not want to be in politics, I think she is thinking hard about it in view of the strong clamor for her to run," said Mary Grace Poe Llamanzares in an interview with the INQUIRER.

FPJPM president Boots Cadsawan told the INQUIRER the group's 500,000 card-carrying members have continued to appeal to Roces to represent the party-list group.

"We are still convincing her even though we feel she is wary of entering politics considering what happened to her husband's presidential bid. In case we cannot convince her, we are hopeful Mary Grace Poe accepts our invitation," Cadsawan said.

The INQUIRER tried to reach Roces for comment but she was out of town. Her manager Dolor Guevarra said it was not true she had decided to run for Congress. "It is her daughter, Mary Grace, who is running," Guevarra said.

Movie producer Marichu Maceda, a close friend of Roces', echoed Guevarra. "I don't think Susan is running. She often tells me that life is too short. *Masyadong magulo ang politika* (Politics is too chaotic)."

Llamanzares would not confirm or deny the report that she had accepted the FPJPM draft: "All your questions will be answered in the press conference at Club Filipino (today). My mom's endorsement will also be heard there."

Asked if she was accepting FPJPM's invitation, she told the INQUIRER in a phone interview: "I haven't decided yet. I am giving myself time. I still have until March 30 [the deadline] to decide. As of now, I am the honorary [head] of FPJPM. I am here to give the group moral support."

Maceda, however, acknowledged that Roces could still change her mind.

"I'm not saying (Susan) will never join politics. We cannot predict what will happen in the future. In the same manner that her husband could not turn his back on the overwhelming clamor of the people ... God moves in mysterious ways," she said.

"I would like Susan to do a Sonia Gandhi (of Indian politics). Gandhi provided the light to her party. I see Susan as the moral force of the opposition," Maceda said.

FPJPM's stated goals are to make available more affordable food, housing, decent-paying jobs and free legal services to the poor. Cadsawan said the group's members were the "silent majority" who had placed their faith in Poe as the only leader that deserved to lead the country in 2004. "We knew he had a kind heart for the underdog and that his name was untarnished."

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Free review classes for nurses set

THE DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND EMployment on Saturday entered into an agreement with the Association of Deans of Philippine Colleges of Nursing (ADPCN) to hold review classes in 29 nursing schools nationwide for those wishing to retake portions of the leak-tainted June 2006 nursing licensure exam.

The retake was required by the US-based Commission on Graduates of Foreign Nursing Schools for all Filipino nurses who passed the exam and want to work in the United States.

"These schools are practically doing this for no profit at all; we want to help the exam passers find work in the US," Labor Secretary Arturo Brion said.

"This will remove all doubt and bring back the lost reputation of the nursing profession," said ADPCN president and University of the East-Ramon Magsaysay College of Nursing Dean Carmelita Divinagracia.

The review, to be held from April 16 to June 3, will be for free. President Macapagal-Arroyo had allocated P20 million for the review and retake.

Registration may be done online on the DOLE website from March 21 to April 4.

The retake will be held in eight schools, namely, UP-Manila, University of Sto. Tomas (Manila); St. Louis University (Baguio City); St. Paul University (Tuguegarao City and Iloilo City), Siliman University (Dumaguete City), Xavier University (Cagayan de Oro City) and San Pedro College (Davao City). *Jerome Aning*

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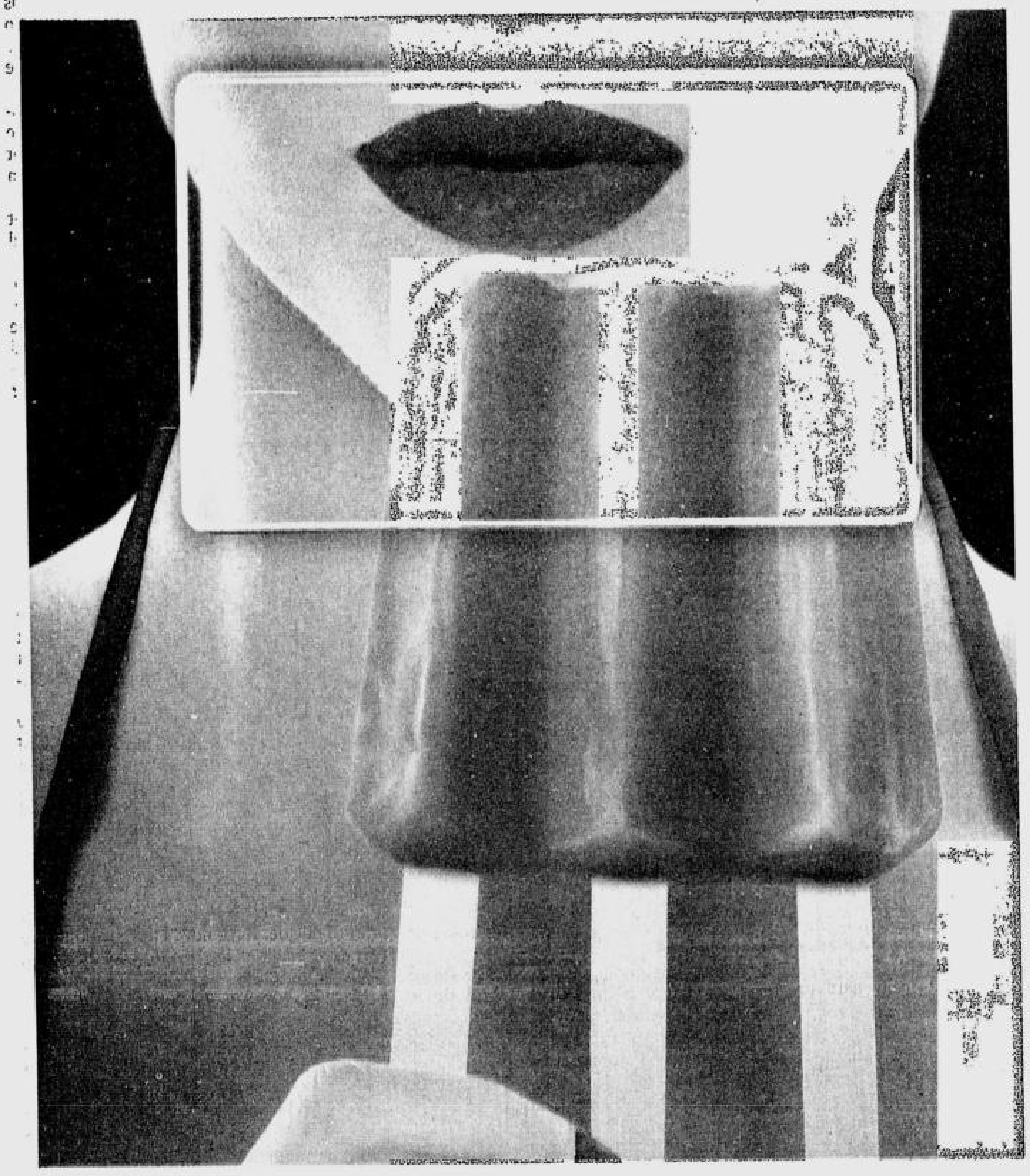

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Mining limits reimposed on small firms

By Michael Lim Ubac

AMID PROTESTS BY ENVIRONMENTAL groups and big mining firms, Malacañang has abandoned its earlier decision to lift the limits imposed on the extraction of minerals by small-scale miners across the country.

Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita instead tossed back to Environment Secretary Angelo Reyes the task of resolving whether Platinum Group Metals Corp. (PGMC) should be permanently stripped of its Environmental Compliance Certificates (ECCs) for extracting nickel ore beyond volume limits set by government.

In an order dated March 8, Ermita admitted that the only issue brought before him was the cancellation of PGMC's ECCs. He said that since all the cases against PGMC involved allegations of over-extraction, the firm should be given the chance to be heard by Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR).

Ermita thus reversed his earlier decision allowing PGMC to resume its mining operations in Palawan.

By remanding PGMC's over-extraction case to DENR "for further proceedings and reception of evidence," the Office of the President has also effectively abandoned its Feb. 6 decision reinstating PGMC's ECCs.

"DENR is now looking into the technical aspect while the DOJ (Department of Justice) will be looking into the legal aspect. Only the recommendations of the DENR and DOJ will eventually influence the outcome of this case," Ermita said.

The new Palace order in effect requires small mining firms to comply with strict volume limits set by government.

Mining activities that employ only manual labor and don't use heavy equipment and blasting are considered small-scale under both Presidential Decree 1899 and Repucblic Act 7076.

Corrections

IN THE MARCH 14 ISSUE, a story on Page A12 mistakenly identified Almario Villegas as an ex-Marine. According to the Public Information Office of the Philippine Marine Corps, Villegas' name is not in its official records. Villegas was also erroneously identified as a former Marine in the story—"Cash, car ready for hostage-taker but ... "—that appeared on the front page of the March 15 issue as well as in the story—"Hostage-taker acted alone, says girlfriend"—that appeared on Page A4 of the March 16 issue.

* * *

IN THE MARCH 17 ISSUE, the caption of a front-page photo misstated that "dama" is the Filipino version of chess. Dama is the Filipino version of checkers.

* * *

IN THE SAME ISSUE, a front-page story—"COA: P419M CARP funds used for food, phones, travel"—misspelled the name of the Catanduanes governor. The governor of Catanduanes is Leandro Verceles Jr.— not Barceles.

* * *

IN THE SAME ISSUE, a story on Page A2—"Davide elected to key UN post"—misstated the date Philippine Permanent Representative to the United Nations Hilario Davide Jr. was elected vice president of the UN Economic and Social Council. Davide was elected to the position on March 15—not March 5.

* * *

IN THE SAME ISSUE, a story on Page A6—"FVR's new goal: To be a hundred"— misstated the position of Hermogenes Esperon Jr. General Esperon is the Armed Forces of the Philippines chief of staff—not the police chief.

* * *

IN THE MARCH 18 ISSUE, the caption of a front-page photo misspelled the first name of the third son of Philippine Daily Inquirer president Sandy Prieto-Romualdez. The correct spelling of the son's name is Nicolas—not Nicholas—Alexander Maximillian.

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Gov't agency insists Marcos wealth benefited farmers

THE PRESIDENTIAL AGRARIAN REFORM Council (PARC) maintained that the P35-billion in confiscated Marcos wealth transferred to the agrarian reform fund (ARF) was used to finance most of the high-impact projects that helped uplift the economic condition of farmer-beneficiaries nationwide.

In a statement, the Department of Agrarian Reform said the Philippine Commission on Good Government (PCGG) had remitted P35 billion to the national government.

DAR said some P10 billion, which remains in the Bureau of Treasury, was allocated to compensate human rights victims of the martial law regime, while P25 billion went for the budgetary requirements of the CARP-implementing agencies from 2004 to 2006.

Agrarian Reform Undersecretary for Finance, Management and Administration Jeffrey Galan said PARC had created an audit management and investigation committee to ensure accountability and transparency in the disbursements of the Marcos funds.

PARC provides yearly allocations from the ARF to all the CARP-implementing agencies (CIAs) for the swift and effective implementation of their respective projects all over the country.

"The transfer of the funds is allowed under the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Law (CARL), which provides that all the funding or appropriations to implement the program include receipts from assets recovered and from [their] sale...," he said.

Contrary to news reports, he said, PARC did not violate any laws when it transferred P449 million to the Department of Agriculture for the GMA Rice Program.

The fund releases, he said, were legitimate and in accordance with Council Resolution No. 88-9-2 signed in 1988 after the enactment of CARP.

Galan clarified that the bulk of the rice fund was intended for hybrid seed production and program management while the rest was set aside to produce farm inputs and implements for agrarian reform beneficiaries.

The seed production was conducted from May up to October 2004. Funds for this project were eventually transferred to the Philippine Rice Institute in May and July. He added that PARC was still awaiting the final report of the DA on the actual disbursements.

According to an earlier Commission on Audit report, government officials spent a hefty P419 million from the ARF on fancy mobile phones, cell phone lines, prepaid cards, clothes, medicines, sumptuous meals and unnecessary travel in 2004 and 2005.

Cheaper utilities not for all elderly

HAVING A SENIOR CITIZEN IN THE HOUSEhold is not a ticket to a 50-percent discount in utility bills, the Department of Social Welfare and Development said yesterday.

Social Welfare Secretary Esperanza Cabral clarified that the discount on water, electricity and telephone services was only granted to senior citizens' centers and residential care or group homes accredited by the agency.

"Households or families with a member who is a senior citizen cannot avail of the 50-percent discount because it is meant as an institutional support to residential facilities taking care of older persons," Cabral explained in a statement.

The clarification was made after the agency was bombarded with calls from senior citizens inquiring if they were entitled to the discount as stated in a news article (not in the INQUIRER).

The discount accorded to residential facilities is provided for in the Expanded Senior Citizens Act of 2003.

The law states that centers and homes for the elderly, which are operated privately or exclusively for the purpose of promoting the welfare of abandoned, neglected, maltreated and homeless senior citizens, should be granted at least a 50-percent discount on electricity, water and telephone bills.

Under the law, a facility for the elderly houses at least six senior citizens in need of round-the-clock care and supervision. *Jocelyn R. Uy*

Meralco marks fete by helping schools

A CORPORATION-WIDE OUTREACH ACTIVITY to benefit selected public elementary schools will highlight the Manila Electric Company's (Meralco) 104th anniversary celebration this month.

Under the program dubbed "Martsa sa Eskwela" (March to Schools), 18 office groups from Meralco will visit 18 public schools within its franchise between March 18 and 31 to turn over necessary tools for learning and help improve school facilities.

"Education can fight poverty and change lives, so we are investing in the future by helping improve the learning environment of public school children," Meralco chair Manuel M. Lopez said in a statement.

The Martsa sa Eskwela program has identified public schools that urgently need IT equipment such as computers and printers or require toilet rehabilitation.

One of these schools is the P. Manalo Elementary School in Barangay San Roque, Pateros, which Lopez and his staff visited on March 3.

Pateros Mayor Rosendo Capco attended the outreach activity, the first under the Martsa sa Eskwela program. Also present were the principal, Ligaya T. Capco, teachers, some 100 second-grade students and barangay officials.

Capco has been helping Meralco in its anti-pilferage campaign where illegal electrical connections are reported and taken down.

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Joker: Let's go slow in condemning AFP

From page A1

if the rebellious elements they (the opposition) had cheered on took control? They cannot speak with a forked tongue," Arroyo said.

A veteran human rights lawyer who, at 80, is the oldest senatorial candidate on the campaign trail, Arroyo had been silent in recent months on the controversy surrounding extrajudicial executions, leaving Bro. Mariano "Mike" Velarde, leader of the 5 million-strong El Shaddai charismatic group, scratching his head.

FROM LEFT: Michael Defensor, Sen. Joker Arroyo, Rep. Miguel Zubiri's wife Audrey and Sen. Ralph Recto munch on sugarcane stalks as Team Unity's senatorial candidates visit a mill in Kananga, Leyte. CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Last week, Velarde indicated that he might include Arroyo in the list of 12 senatorial candidates he would endorse in the May elections because Arroyo was a brave man of high principles—qualities that he thought a member of the upper chamber should possess.

'Wrong is wrong'

But Velarde asked: "Why is he (Arroyo) not speaking on the political killings? If you have unwavering principles, what is wrong is wrong."

At the Iloilo news conference, Arroyo and the other Team Unity members declared that they did not favor a move to revive the antisubversion law as part of ongoing efforts to clamp down on individuals and groups sympathetic to the communist movement.

Arroyo noted that not even the military was a "monolithic organization" that blindly followed its leaders, citing differences of opinion on whether to outlaw communism.

Senatorial candidate Michael Defensor said that instead of going after communist sympathizers with "hammer and tongs," the government should encourage them to take their ideological battle to Congress.

"We should allow the communists to stay in Congress and let the military focus its fight versus the armed component of the group, the New People's Army," said Defensor.

During a campaign stop in Ormoc City in Leyte on Saturday, Arroyo urged the administration to ignore the US Senate inquiry that began last week in Washington into the alleged murders of more than 830 militants since Ms Arroyo became President in 2001. The INQUIRER count is 295 killed.

'No business'

"They have no business looking into it," Arroyo said. "How low can we get in going and participating officially, investigating what is happening in the country? We can't stoop lower."

Senatorial candidate Edgardo Angara also said in Ormoc that any finding of the US Senate subcommittee on East Asia and the Pacific on the alleged state-sanctioned killing of left-leaning persons was not binding on the Philippines.

"We may question it. The testimonies may not all be reliable. Some of them could come from polluted sources," Angara said.

But he said it was necessary for the Philippines to show that it was complying with international conventions on human rights because respect for human rights was an international concern, not just of the United States.

Sison's fears

On Saturday, Jose Ma. Sison, founding chair of the Communist Party of the Philippines on exile in the Netherlands, said that President Macapagal-Arroyo was out to get her enemies through the antiterror law that takes effect after the May balloting.

He warned that the administration's counterinsurgency campaign would spark more political killings.

"More people would be killed, abducted and made to suffer by Ms Arroyo's allies in the military and police," he said on his website. *With reports from Cynthia D. Balana and Christine O. Avendaño*

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Negros tillers fault DAR for their plight

By Jocelyn R. Uy

FARMERS ON A HUNGER STRIKE IN FRONT of the Department of Agrarian Reform building in Quezon City rejected yesterday the offer of Catholic Bishop Patricio Buzon to broker a dialogue between them and another group of farmers loyal to the former landlord who are blocking their installation in the contested sugar plantation.

The protesting farmers said a dialogue would merely delay the formal turnover of 144-hectares in Hacienda Velez-Malaga in Negros Occidental that was granted to 122 beneficiaries, including themselves, under the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program in 2002.

"We welcome any dialogue but they have to install us first on our land," Gregorio Paclibar, president of the Hacienda Velez-Malaga Agrarian Reform Beneficiaries Organization, told the INQUIRER yesterday.

Buzon of Kabankalan, Negros Occidental, visited the striking farmers on Saturday and offered to mediate the conflict between the two groups. Attempts by the farmer-beneficiaries to occupy the land early this year erupted in violence, leaving one farmer dead.

"The resistance of the farmers loyal to (former landowner) Roberto Cuenca is not the issue here. The real issue is the failure of Agrarian Reform Secretary Nasser Pangandaman to install us," Paclibar said in Filipino.

Paclibar said that if there was any dialogue that Buzon should mediate, it was between Pangandaman and Cuenca, on one side, and their group. Task Force Mapalad, the protesting farmers' umbrella organization, has also called on President Macapagal-Arroyo to intervene but she has not responded.

Meanwhile, Jesuit priest Fr. Romeo Intengan, cofounder of the Partido Demokratiko Sosyalista ng Pilipinas, yesterday said he found it difficult to understand Pangandaman's claim of imminent violence at the hacienda should he proceed with the farmers' installation.

More than a week after the farmers began their hunger strike, Pangandaman set their installation for March 8 but postponed it because of threats of violence from the other group, which Intengan described as "exaggerated."

"I find [his statement] not credible. The state has a duty to stop the violence and the police and the military have been doing their duty," said Intengan, who declared his full support to the cause of the striking farmers.

He said that Pangandaman's statement was also a "slap on the face of the Armed Forces of the Philippines, which had assured the safety of the farmers" once they were installed.

Pangandaman had said he would reschedule the installation as soon as proper security arrangements were in place.

THE DAILY GOSPEL

Monday, March 19, 2007
Joseph, Husband of Mary
1st Reading: 2 S 7:4-5, 12-14, 16
2nd Reading: Rom 4:13, 16-18, 22
Gospel: Matthew 1:16, 18-21, 24

Jacob was the father of Joseph, the husband of Mary, and from her came Jesus who is called the Christ-the Messiah.

This is how Jesus Christ was born. Mary his mother had been given to Joseph in marriage but before they lived together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit.

Then Joseph, her husband, made plans to divorce her in all secrecy. He was an upright man, and in no way did he want to discredit her.

While he was pondering over this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph, descendant of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife. She has conceived by the Holy Spirit, and now she will bear a son. You shall call him 'Jesus' for he will save his people from their sins." When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had told him to do and he took his wife to his home.

Commentary

I will be a father to him and he shall be a son to me. These words of God to David can be rightly said of Joseph to Jesus and of God to Joseph. Jesus grew up in a Jewish family and Joseph would have taught him how to be a man, a Jew, a member of the people and of the covenant with God, faithful, obedient and prayerful. It was Joseph who taught him the law and the prophets, the rites and the customs of being Jewish, by example, and by word, and as his teacher. Whatever Jesus learned of being human as a man and as a father, he learned from Joseph. Joseph's faith was credited to him as justice as surely as was Abraham who was the father of nations.

Joseph is described as obedient to the law, upright and just. And yet he must choose whether to put Mary away quietly (break the marriage covenant and force her to leave and live on her own) or expose her to the law (humiliation and even death by stoning together with her unborn child). Yet Joseph is the image in Matthew's gospel of the new believer, the follower of Jesus who knows the heart and spirit of the law, and so disobeys the letter of the law. Instead he relies on the Word of the Scripture and obeys the heart of the law that makes him husband and father, adopting Jesus as his own child. There is so much we can learn from Joseph about being faithful, about compassion and obedience, about God as Father, just as Jesus learned.

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US airline employs chief apology officer

From page A1

tion regulations from Congress.

But no airline accepts blame quite like Southwest Airlines, which employs Fred Taylor Jr. in a job that could be called chief apology officer.

His formal title is senior manager of proactive customer communications. But Taylor—37, rail thin and mildly compulsive, by his own admission—spends his typical 12-hour workday finding out how Southwest disappointed its customers and then firing off homespun letters of apology.

"Erring on the side of caution, our captain decided to return to Phoenix rather than second-guess the smell that was in the cabin," Taylor wrote to passengers who were on a March 7 flight to Albuquerque. A faulty valve was to blame.

"Not toxic, it was obviously annoying," he assured the passengers throwing in a free voucher for future travel to clear the air.

Taylor composes about 180 letters a year explaining what went wrong on particular flights and, with about 110 passengers per flight, he mails off roughly 20,000 mea culpas. Each one bears his direct phone line.

This year, he has already exceeded that total because Southwest sent written apologies to 22,000 passengers who passed through a choked Las Vegas airport on Feb. 19 and Feb. 20. (That letter listed a general customer service number.)

Such fiascoes are rare. But even on good days, big airlines have plenty to be sorry about—a tragicomic mix of broken planes, sick passengers, and scary landings.

Now, rather than rely entirely on weary front-line workers, many airlines are institutionalizing the apology.

American Airlines says its apology letters have been running twice the level of a year ago. JetBlue now e-mails an apology within 36 hours of certain service failures. And Continental Airlines and US Airways both say they are sending many more apology letters.

Taylor of Southwest also writes an internal daily report, used by others at the airline to explain service failings. It is leavened with a comic touch that his wife said made him the clown of their freshman college algebra class.

Recapping a troubled flight from Las Vegas to San Jose on April 18 last year, for instance, he explained that the plane had circled back after takeoff because the landing gear would not retract. And there was more.

"During the return, a customer became ill and apparently 'decorated' three rows of seats—and perhaps a few customers," Taylor wrote. "No word on how Linda Blair is doing."

New York Times News Service

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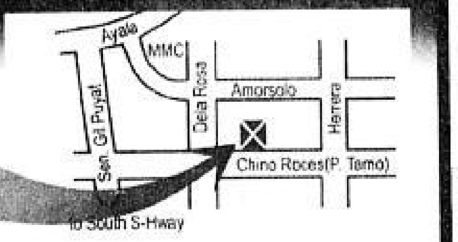

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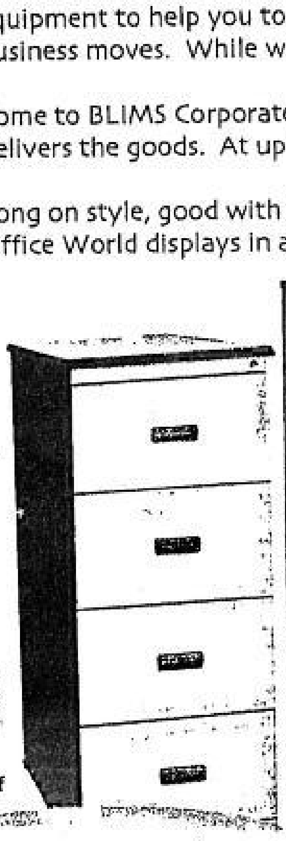

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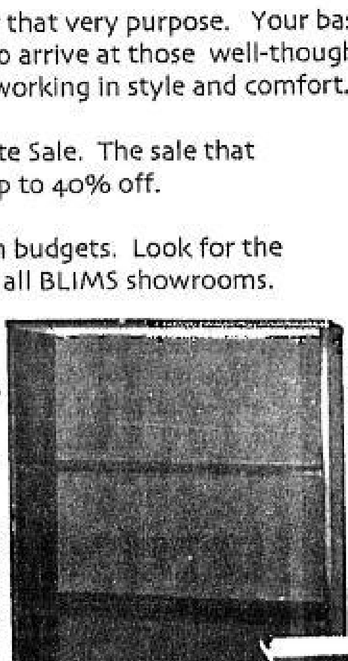

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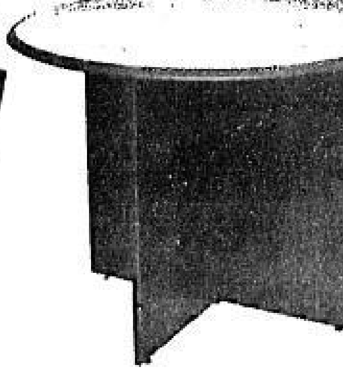

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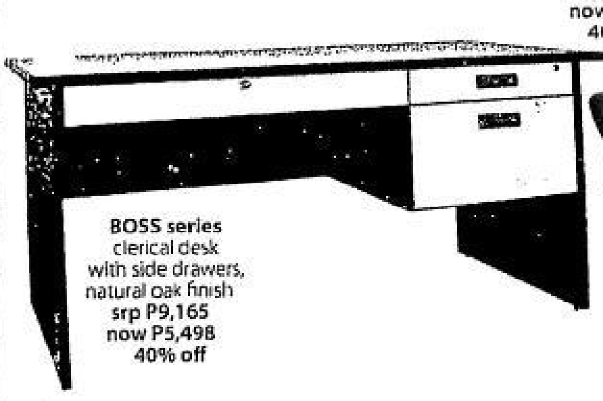

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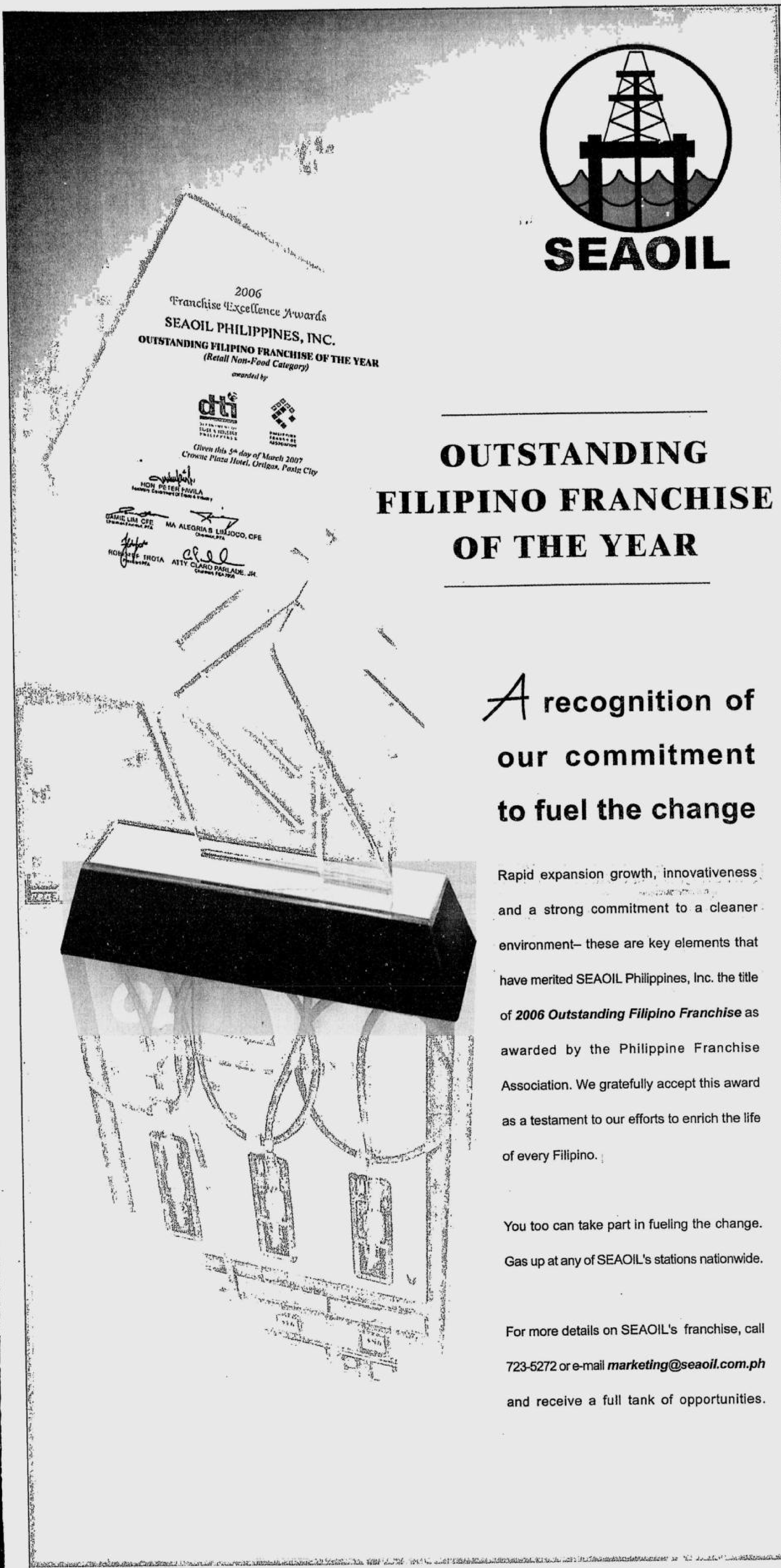

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SEAOIL Philippines remains at the forefront of the Philippine oil industry with its innovative products and commitment to quality. The company's long history of service to the nation and its active involvement in environmental preservation are attested to by the accolades that it has acquired over the years. From 2004 to 2006, SEAOIL was recognized by the Consumer Union of the Philippines as the country's "Outstanding Gasoline Station" during the 15th, 16th and 17th Annual National Consumer Awards (ANCA). Likewise, it received the "Top Gasoline Station" and "Top Gasoline Engine Oil Brand" awards given by the National Consumer Affairs Foundation (NCAF) in 2004. In 2005, it garnered the title of "Most Outstanding Petroleum Company" at the Philippine Marketing Excellence Awards. This year, SEAOIL is thankful for the honor of receiving the "2006 Outstanding Filipino Franchise Award" from the Philippine Franchise Association (PFA) and the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI). This is the highest honor that a local franchise could receive from the said organizations.

Since its incorporation in 1978, SEAOIL has been consistent in its pursuit of service excellence by providing innovative products fit for the Filipino consumer. By partnering with the world's top additive suppliers such as Paramins and Afton, SEAOIL has continuously reshaped the landscape of the local oil industry by pioneering technological advancements such as unleaded gasoline, low-sulfur diesel and environment-friendly biofuels (i.e., ethanol and biodiesel).

To help Filipinos overcome times of economic difficulty, SEAOIL was also the first independent company to offer gasoline station dealerships after the deregulation of the oil industry. From the time it started franchising in 1997, SEAOIL's number of gasoline stations nationwide has grown to over a hundred because of the affordability and flexibility of its investment offerings.

In fulfillment of its corporate responsibility to protect the environment, SEAOIL has partnered with organizations such as ABS-CBN thru its Bantay-Usok and Bantay Kalikasan Programs and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) thru its Clean Cities Program and Fuels for Life Movement in pursuing their advocacies. Likewise, SEAOIL has been at the forefront of promoting the use of alternative fuels through its partnership with The Philippine Biodiesel Alliance (TPBA) and its support of the Sustainable Energy Development Program (SEDP).

As the Philippines experiences the economic effects of fluctuating world oil prices, SEAOIL continues to enrich the lives of Filipinos by pioneering the use of renewable fuels found in its E-10 ethanol-blended gasoline and Coco-Methyl Ester-based BioExceed (a diesel fuel additive). The biofuel components of such products could be sourced and manufactured locally and thus open the doors for economic activity within the country.

Indeed, SEAOIL has become a leader for both innovation and service excellence in the Philippine oil industry. Its pursuit for technological advancement in the development of its products and services has allowed it to bring the world's best fuel products to the local market. Its commitment to enrich the lives of Filipinos has driven it to offer the most reasonable prices at its pumps as well as provide business partners with the most cost-efficient franchise packages. Its dedication to uplifting the country's economy and environment has given new hope to the countryside with the introduction of biofuels. All this reflects SEAOIL's vision of a bright and promising future both for itself and for all Filipinos.

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BLOCKINGS (GUARANTEED SEATS & HOTELS)

Hongkong

19-22 Apr	29Apr-01May	10-13 May
248	219	218

Kuala Lumpur 05Apr-08Apr 4D/3N 285

Boracay

Mar 30-Apr 1 3D/2N	P9450	Apr 13-15/27-29 3D/2N	P8300
Apr 5-8 4D/3N	P11650	Apr 20-22 3D/2N	P9000

3N Shenzhen	129	3N Hongkong	229
1N Macau + 2N Shenzhen	149	1N Macau+2N HKG or 1N HKG + 1N Shenzhen + 3N SHA + 1N Macau	299
1N HKG + 2N Shenzhen +1N Macau	159		
2N HKG +1N Shenzhen +1N Macau	179		
1N Macau+2N Shenzhen +1N HKG	199	1N Shenzhen+2N SHA+3N Beijing +1N Macau	389
2N Shenzhen+2N SHA+3N Beijing or 1N Macau + 1N Shanghai + 3N Beijing + 1N Shenzhen			399

CANTON FAIR PACKAGE
2N Canton + 1N Macau 389 | 4D/3N Canton 399

HONGKONG DISNEYLAND

2N Hongkong w/ Disney Day Tour	209
1N Hongkong + 1N Disneyland	259
2N Hongkong + 1N Disneyland	278
1N Macau+1N HKG+1N Shenzhen w/ Disney Day Tour	339
1N Macau+1N HKG+2N Shenzhen w/ Disney Day Tour	369

HKG Free & Easy 3D/2N	149	Jakarta 3N	248
Kuala Lumpur 3N	155	2N Bkk + 2N Brunei 5D/4N	285
Bangkok 3N	163	Taipei 3D/2N	338
Kuala+Genting 4D/3N Highlands	188	4-City (Singapore/Malaysia/Indonesia/Brunei) 5D/4N	359
Singapore 3N	189	Singapore w/ Malaysia 6D/5N overland	383
3-City (Singapore/Malaysia/Indonesia) 4D/3N	235	Korea 5D/4N	709
Brunei free & easy 3D/2N	235	Sydney 4D/3N	730
Macau 4D/3N	238	Holy Land 9D/8N	1650
Europe		14D/13N	2588

Cebu 3D/2N	P2859	Palawan 3D/2N	P5149
Bohol 3D/2N	P4100	Davao 3D/2N	P5800
Boracay 3D/2N	P4300	Dakak 3D/2N	P6400

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Singapore \$175

HONGKONG-SHENZHEN	\$99
DISNEYLAND+WINDOW TO THE WORLD	169
SINGAPORE-MALAYSIA-INDONESIA	247
8D/7N SHANGHAI-BEIJING	399

++ HOLY WEEK BLOCKINGS ++

3 NIGHTS SHENZHEN	\$199
SHENZHEN+HONGKONG DISNEYLAND	259
3 NIGHTS HONGKONG	299
8D/7N SHENZHEN-SHANGHAI-BEIJING	488

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TICKET ONLY	
HONGKONG	\$77
BANGKOK	120
SINGAPORE	105
KUALA LUMPUR	62
SAIGON	206
SEOUL	365
JAPAN	350
TAIPEI	230
SHANGHAI	310
XIAMEN	215
AUSTRALIA	526
LOS ANGELES	583
NEW YORK	680
VANCOUVER	695
EUROPE	755

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2 NITES SHENZHEN \$59
WITH DISNEYLAND \$149

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3D/2N VIA PAL \$210

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4D BANGKOK (6-9 apr) 318

1N Macau 2N Shenzhen (09 apr)	149	1N Shanghai 2N Beijing 1N Szx 1N Xian 1N Macau (29 mar)	480
1N Hongkong 2N Shenzhen (25 mar)	169		
1N Shenzhen 1N Hkg 1N Macau	209	3N Shenzhen w/ Disney Day Tour (25 mar)	189
1N Macau 1N Hkg 1N Shenzhen	229	3N Shenzhen	159
2N Hongkong 1N Shenzhen	219	2N Shenzhen 1N Macau	189
Disneyland Day Tour Family Package (3D)	242	Disneyland Overnight Family Package (3D)	268
Disneyland Day Tour Family Package (4D)	259	Disneyland Overnight Family Package (4D)	279

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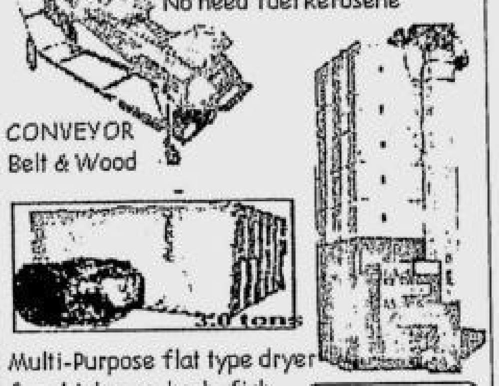

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XIAMEN	\$220
SAIGON	\$158
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LOS ANGELES	\$569
NEW YORK	\$669
LONDON	\$760
GUAM	\$310

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BANGKOK+PATTAYA	\$345
3Nites SINGAPORE	\$194
3N SINGAPORE + KUALA + INDONESIA	\$356
3Nites KUALA LUMPUR	\$322
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SINGAPORE	\$272	SIN/KUL/INDO	\$337
BKK+PATTAYA	\$315	SHANGHAI	\$405
BRUNEI	\$315	BEIJING	\$430

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4D Hongkong with DISNEYLAND + Shenzhen w/ WINDOWS OF THE WORLD US\$ 169		4D HongKong Free & Easy US\$ 167
4D HongKong Disney Day Tour US\$ 192	3D HongKong Overnight Disney US\$ 207	3D BANGKOK Package US\$ 196
3D SINGAPORE Package US\$ 202	4D SHANGHAI Package US\$ 355	4D BEIJING Package US\$ 360

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9D	KOREA + TAIWAN — Dep April 1 only	\$1,380
8D	TIBET (LHASA)+XIAN+XINING — Dep Apr 2 (FULLBOARD)	\$998
8D	BEIJING+SHENZHEN+ HONGKONG+MACAU — Dep Apr. 2 only	\$668
8D	XIAN+BEIJING+SHANGHAI — Dep Apr 2	\$688
6D	BEIJING + SHANGHAI — Dep. Apr 4	\$599
6D	KUALA LUMPUR + MALACCA + GENTING HIGHLAND + SUNWAY LAGOON + SINGAPORE — Dep Apr 5	\$588
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5D	2N HONGKONG w/ DISNEYLAND + 1N SHENZHEN + 1N MACAU — Dep Apr 03 only	\$388
8D	BEIJING + SHANGHAI — Dep. Mar. 22, 25, 27 / Apr. 2, 4 & 5	\$339up
4D	1N HONGKONG + 2N SHENZHEN — Dep Apr 5	\$299

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CAMBODIA & VIETNAM	Dep Date Mar 24-25 / Apr 24/28-25	USD780 / USD735
MYSTICAL TAIPEI	Dep Date Apr. 6-8 / May 28-31	USD650 / USD680
JAPAN	Dep Date Apr 23-30 / May 21-28	USD1905
SINGAPORE	3D/2N	USD300

SIEM REAP 3D/2N USD496	BANGKOK 3D/2N USD245	HONGKONG 3D/2N USD316

TAIPEI 3D/2N USD373	HANOI 3D/2N USD542	PHNOM PEHN 3D/2N USD484	SHANGHAI USD431

OCEANIA

AUSTRALIA Dep. Date Apr. 23-30 / May 21-28 USD1860

SAIPAN 3D/2N	USD460	SYDNEY 3D/2N	USD804
CAIRNS 3D/2N	USD811	BRISBANE 3D/2N	USD798
ADELAIDE 3D/2N	USD797	GUAM 4D/4N	USD528
MELBOURNE 3D/2N	USD803	GOLDCOAST 3D/2N	USD794
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EXPLORE KOREA 4 CITIES — DEP. DATE: APRIL 1-7 via PAL — USD1270

SEOUL — ANY DAY DEPARTURE 3D/2N — USD640

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HONOLULU	4D/3N	USD1150
LOS ANGELES	4D/3N	USD1175
NEW YORK	5D/4N	USD1379

EUROPE

PRAGUE 5D/4N USD1456	NICE 5D/4N USD1438
PARIS 5D/4N USD1299	FRANKFURT 5D/4N USD1087
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FARES

SEOUL	\$ 480	TAIPEI	\$ 157	HOUSTON	\$ 780
BANGKOK	157	BEIJING	415	GUAM	320
SINGAPORE	157	XIAMEN	220	NEWYORK	880
JAKARTA	280	SHANGHAI	350	AKL/CHC/WLG	815
HONGKONG	140	INDIA	511	SYD/PER	520
SAIGON	157	OSAKA	350	SYD/MEL	605
SIEM REAP	400	NAGOYA	415	SYD/BNE	520
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HANOI	508	VANCOUVER	680	AMSTERDAM	720

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C1B6T	Beijing w/express train to Shanghai 6 Days	
H1	Shanghai 3 - 4 Days	Tues, Thur, Fri, Sun
H2-3	Shanghai, Suzhou, Hangzhou 4 - 6 Days	3/30 to 4/07 Daily
C1A	Beijing, Xian, Guilin 6 - 8 Days	Thursday
C1B	Beijing, Shanghai, Guilin 6 - 8 Days	Tuesday, Thursday
C1C	Beijing, Xian, Shanghai, Guilin 6 - 10 Days	Tue, Thur
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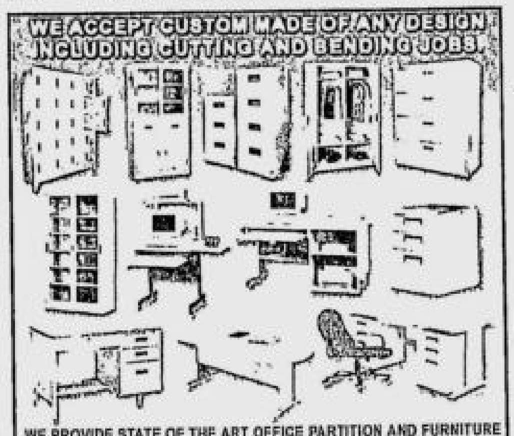

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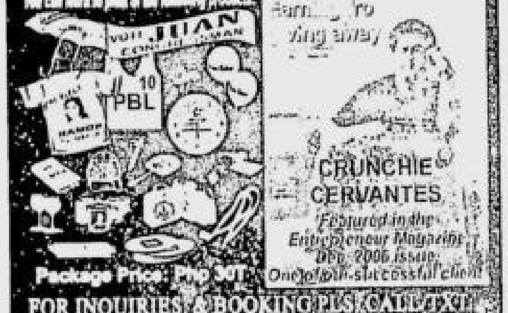
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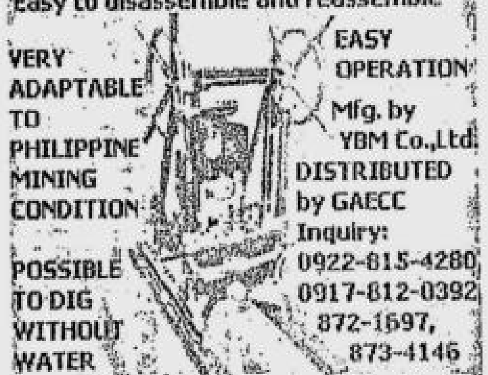

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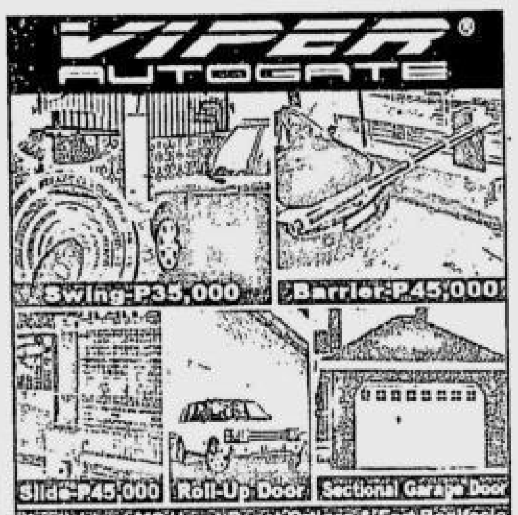

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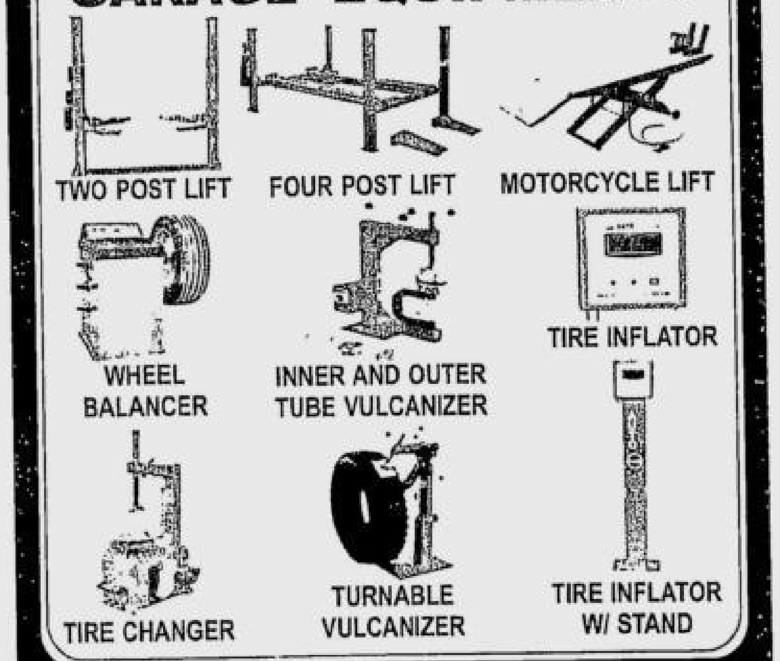

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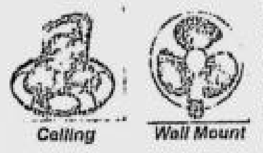

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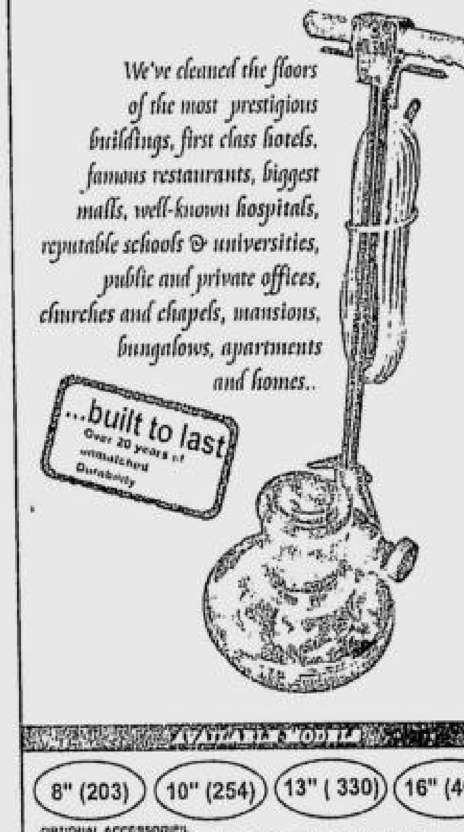
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PNP delays transfer of Satur to Leyte

From page A1

tained at the Manila Police Department, has denied involvement in the supposed killings, saying he was a political prisoner under martial law at the time.

The lawmaker told the INQUIRER last night he had not been told of any order transferring him to Leyte but that his lawyers planned to file petitions before the Hilongos court and the Supreme Court to defer his transfer.

The Supreme Court has set for March 23 a hearing on Ocampo's earlier petition challenging the legality of his arrest.

Calderon said the PNP wanted to give "due process" to Ocampo, adding that a 36-hour deadline for his turnover to the Hilongos court was dependent on many things, including police preparations.

Ocampo said he and his lawyers would block efforts by the Department of Justice to transfer him to Leyte.

"I think there was a statement by Justice Secretary (Raul) Gonzalez advising me to get ready to go to Leyte. We already made the corresponding representation for them not to do that and to wait for the oral arguments on March 23," he said in Filipino.

"If the Supreme Court decides to nullify the [arrest] warrant, I won't be needed in Leyte anymore. What is their reason to transfer me now and bring me back on Friday? Just to satisfy the warrant?" he said.

No recycling of bones

Meanwhile, Armed Forces Chief of Staff Gen. Hermogenes Esperon Jr. said yesterday he could not have "recycled the bones" uncovered in a mass grave in Leyte for which Ocampo was arrested.

"*Alam ninyo kung mayroon akong isang kinakatakutan? Ayokong gumalaw ng buto ng patay.* (Do you know what I fear? I don't want to disturb skeletal remains)," he told reporters yesterday at Fort del Pilar in Baguio City.

Esperon and Defense Secretary Hermogenes Ebdane Jr. attended the parade held in honor of the graduating Philippine Military Academy "Maragtas" Class of 2007.

Before his detention on Friday, Ocampo accused Esperon of planting skeletons of supposed government spies in a Leyte mass grave that was uncovered on Aug. 26, 2006.

A Leyte court ordered the arrest of Ocampo, former spokesperson of the National Democratic Front (NDF), for allegedly ordering the purge of spies in the communist movement more than 20 years ago.

Ocampo, Communist Party of the Philippines founder Jose Ma. Sison and NDF leader Luis Jalandoni have been indicted for the series of murders that occurred in the 1980s.

"In August, I heard about the graves five days after they were uncovered ... The people who were there first were the families of the slain communists. The media were also at the site first before we arrived," Esperon told reporters at a press conference here.

He said these details proved that the military could not have faked the grave site.

Instead of getting back at him, Esperon said Ocampo should instead "face the family of the people murdered by communists" in court.

ESPERON

OCAMPO

Ocampo asked the high court to void the Leyte judge's arrest order, saying it was part of a government conspiracy to harass the party-list group Bayan Muna, which is campaigning to win a third term in the House of Representatives.

After Ocampo's escape

Ebdane, at the press conference, said the Leyte murders occurred after Ocampo escaped in 1985.

"[Ocampo] went to the National Press Club [accompanied by jail guards] to attend an event. *Tumakas iyon* (He escaped). The killings happened after he escaped," he said.

"No less than two personalities who were involved in the killings pointed to him as the one who had ordered them to kill [the alleged spies in the communist organization]," said Ebdane, a former Philippine National Police chief.

"That [information] is what [Ocampo] should respond to. He shouldn't just say he was detained [when the murders occurred in Leyte]," the defense secretary said.

Ebdane said the military would not object to leftist groups participating in elections as long as they were not supported by armed groups.

Esperon said the AFP was "not blind" to the charges that soldiers may have harmed or killed leftists and militants in the provinces.

He said the military had prosecuted 19 cases implicating soldiers in human rights violations.

No. 1 nominee

Manuel Loste, Bayan Muna vice chair, said Ocampo would remain Bayan Muna's top nominee for the May 14 elections.

Bayan Muna Rep. Teodoro Casiño, who has visited Ocampo every day since his detention, said Ocampo's arrest elicited sympathy not only for Ocampo but also for Bayan Muna.

Aside from getting ready for the campaign and the hearing on March 23, Casiño said Bayan Muna was preparing for the solidarity gathering for Ocampo today at Club Filipino in San Juan, Metro Manila.

The meeting, he said, would be attended by senatorial candidates and groups sympathetic to Ocampo's plight.

Ocampo, 67, was found yesterday to be "borderline hypertensive" after undergoing a checkup by doctors from the militant human rights group Karapatan.

Dr. Sylvia Ciocon-de la Paz and Dr. Eleanor Jara said Ocampo's blood pressure went up to 128/90 when they measured it at around noon.

De la Paz said the lawmaker must be under stress, and that the confined space where he is staying may also be a factor. The small room, she said, did not have windows to let sunlight in.

More space, sunlight

"He needs more space, sunlight and some exercise," De la Paz said.

Jara said she visited Ocampo to return the support he had lent to the health sector. She said Ocampo, using his pork barrel, had prioritized the improvement of health services in public hospitals.

"Most of our indigent patients are now able to get the help they need. That is why we are asking all people, especially doctors, to show their concern for the good congressman," she said.

Ocampo, however, played down the health findings and said he was actually surprised at the result.

"It's high because for 40 years I've maintained a 110/90 or 120/80 blood pressure. Maybe it's because I didn't have enough sleep last night," he said, adding that he and his wife, Carolina, waited up for their daughter Silahis and 6-year-old grandson Daniel, who arrived from Tokyo at midnight. *With a report from Desiree Caluza, Inquirer Northern Luzon*

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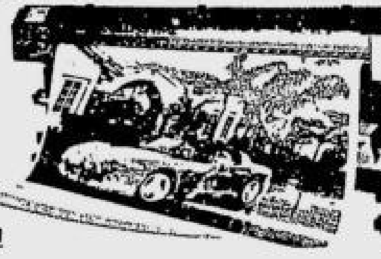
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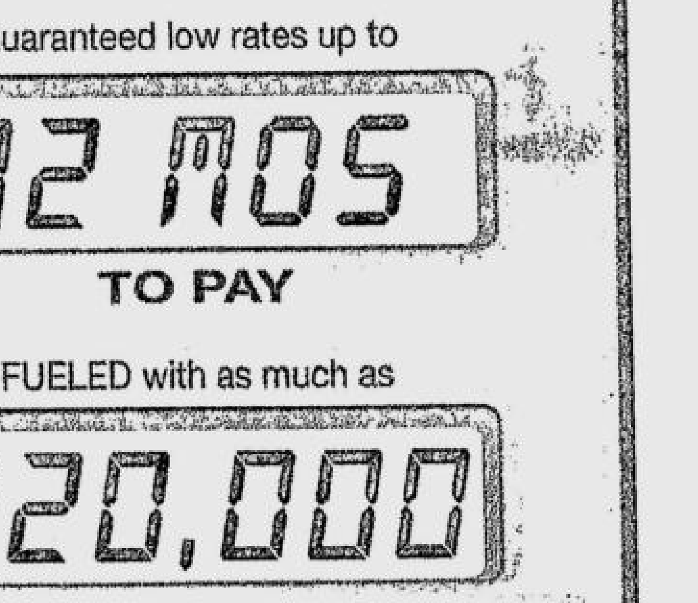

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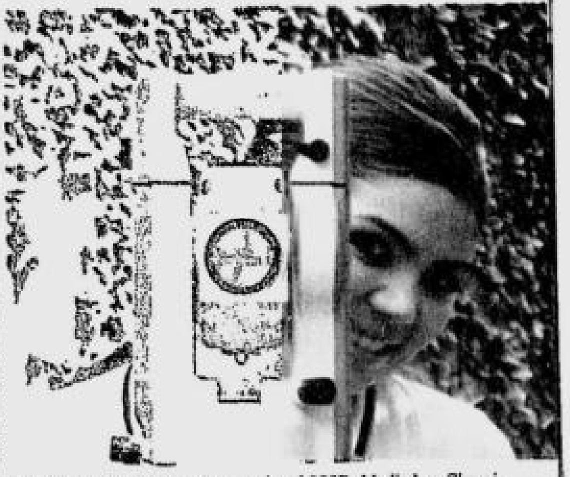
Ms. Binibining Pilipinas International 2007, Nadia Lee Shami.

(Pictures courtesy of Nino Camacho of NCC) Top left and Bottom left - CCP Bobcats
Engr. Dean Salac, Engr. Patrick Gregory B. Jara, and Atty. Crispino Reyes.

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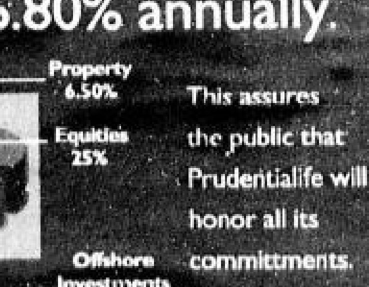

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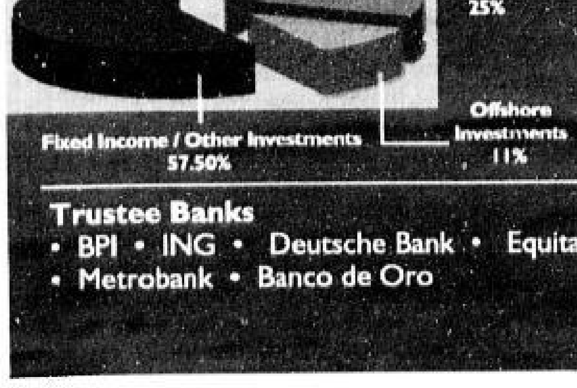

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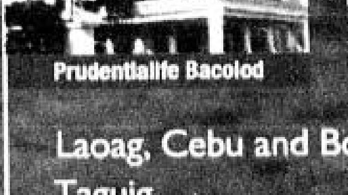

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Police vs military

EDITORIAL

THERE SEEMS TO BE A LOW-INTENSITY DEBATE between the country's top generals, with the military favoring policies that hark back to martial-law days, and the police, politely, taking issue with them. We do not want to make too much of the policy difference, because both the Armed Forces and the Philippine National Police still report to, and follow the lead of, the commander-in-chief. But we do wish to call attention to the exchange of views as it is carried out in the news columns.

Two weeks ago, the AFP deployed troops to urban poor areas in Metro Manila, giving different reasons along the way. Prominence was given to the rationale offered by the commanding general of the National Capitol Region, that the deployment was part of the military's responsibility in ensuring peace and order.

PNP Deputy Director General Avelino Razon reacted immediately. "I think that statement is wrong and inaccurate," he said, insisting that the AFP ought not to be involved in anti-crime operations.

Last week, Gen. Hermogenes Esperon, AFP chief of staff, called for the revival of the Anti-Subversion Law, to outlaw—yet again—the Communist Party of the Philippines and its front organizations. "If I had my way, I would really go for the declaration of outlawing the CPP as they are now."

The PNP's spokesman, Chief Supt. Samuel Pagdilao, offered a contrary view. "We don't have to resurrect a dead law. There is already a new law, the Human Security Act. The new law is sufficient." In explaining his remarks, Pagdilao put his finger on the central argument. "Under the old law, any group or persons could be outlawed by the government even without the benefit of a trial. Mere membership was enough."

The sacred rights of free speech, free assembly and a free press are all based on a prior, indeed a primordial, right: freedom of thought. What the Anti-Subversion Law allowed (and indeed what earlier versions of the Human Security Act, better known as the anti-terrorism law, also proposed) was incarceration for "mere membership." This is an assault on our fundamental rights that we must fight with all our means.

But perhaps the military top brass is not interested in arguments from liberty. Well, let's get down to brass tacks.

Was the law effective?

Republic Act 1700 was enacted in 1957—**after** the Huk rebellion had been defeated. It couldn't have been a factor, therefore, much less a decisive one, in ending the insurgency that, at its peak, was commonly said to be "knocking on the gates" of the capital.

The law was in place when the Communist Party of the Philippines was launched in 1968; so much for its deterrent effect. It was in force during the Marcos dictatorship, when the communist insurgency reached its peak. It couldn't have been a factor in containing the insurgency, because in fact the communist rebellion was not contained. Under the Marcos dictatorship, at a time when generals helped call the shots, it grew worse.

The law was finally repealed in 1992. The repeal came despite the failure of the peace talks launched by the Aquino administration, because the Magsaysay formula for ending the insurgency—winning hearts and minds, encouraging democratic participation, using guerrilla tactics in the service of a coherent military strategy—was still official government policy.

In the last decade or so, the CPP is a shadow of its former self; it is still a self-sustaining movement in the countryside, but in sheer numbers it is about a third of what it was at its height. Indeed, Esperon could not help pointing out the AFP's impressive performance: It had brought down the size of the communist insurgency from 11,930 men in 2001 to 7,160 this year. "We believe that at the rate we're going, we would reduce them by about 1,000 every year, which means from now to 2010 ... we would cut the 7,000 by half, which is 3,500."

Let's do the math. Esperon has promised to render the CPP and the New People's Army irrelevant by 2010, the year President Macapagal-Arroyo leaves office. For him, a strength of 3,500 men means that the NPA can "no longer launch any major tactical operations." That means that the AFP is right on track. What does Esperon need the Anti-Subversion Law for?

"If I had my way, I would want to arrest all these suspects, but no, we have to file the appropriate cases, we need warrants of arrest." Perhaps, what Esperon really wants to do away with is the rule of law?

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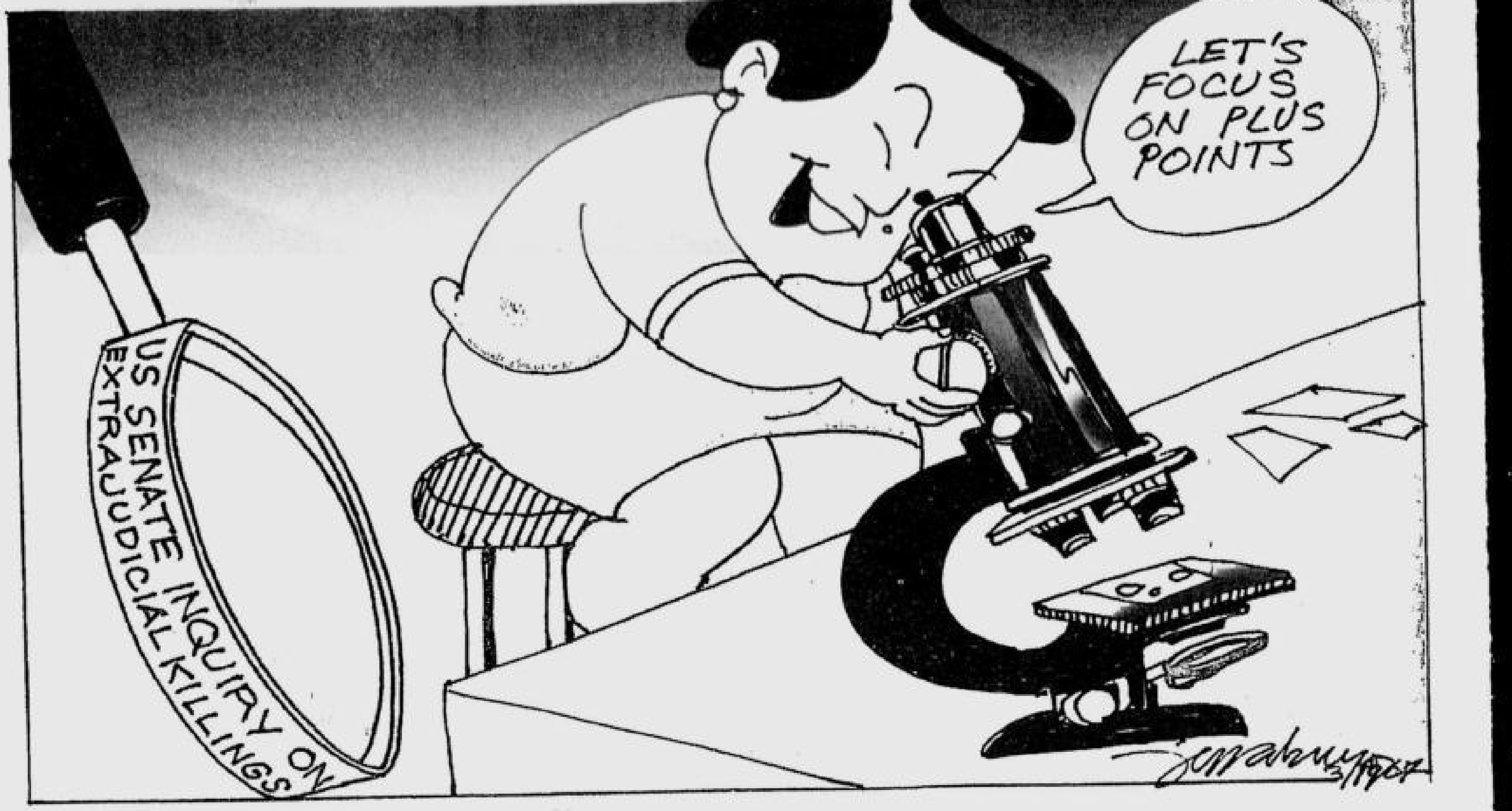
LET'S FOCUS ON PLUS POINTS
US SENATE INQUIRY ON EXTRAJUDICIAL KILLINGS

Closing down Pandacan depot not that simple

As I See It

Neal H. Cruz

THE SUPREME COURT DECISION DIRECTING three oil companies to shut down their fuel depot in Pandacan and relocate it somewhere else is not as simple as it looks. The tribunal can be likened to King Canute who, walking out to the seashore, ordered the waves to stop at his feet. The king, of course, could not enforce his order. The same is true with the Supreme Court. The immediate shutting down of the Pandacan Terminals will have far-reaching repercussions not foreseen by the magistrates and the city council of Manila.

We cannot deny that with terrorism on the rise, the depot poses a threat to residents not only of Pandacan but also of nearby areas. The storage tanks in that depot, with their highly combustible petroleum products, are tempting targets for any terrorist. All he needs is to fire a bazooka or a grenade launcher at one of the tanks to start a conflagration. And he can do this from one of the nearby squatter shanties. In the interest of safety, the depot has to be shut down.

True, but think of the grave consequences: The depot supplies fuels and lubricants to various strategic industries. Its closure will definitely affect the national economy.

According to a position paper of the "Big Three" (Petron, Caltex and Shell), the depot supplies:

- Fifty percent of the country's total demand for fuels, including 1,787 retail stations in Regions 1 to 4, including 459 stations in Metro Manila alone
- Seventy percent of the shipping industry's needs nationwide
- Ninety percent of lubricant requirements nationwide
- Seventy-six percent of all aviation fuel needs nationwide
- Twenty-five percent of the demand for chemicals nationwide

The Pandacan oil depot is Metro Manila's "energy lifeline." Because there are limited alternative supply points, its closure will result in the shortage of fuel supplies. "These alternative locations are inadequate," says the position paper, "because of tankage limitations, lack of loading facilities, limited tank trucks, not to mention the greater supply distances."

At best, the paper points out, "we can supply only 40 percent of present volumes, or 715 stations in Regions 1 to 4 and in the National Capital Region."

Imagine what can happen then:

- The Pandacan depot gets its supply through barges and pipelines from the refineries in Batangas and Bataan. If closed, it would have its supply delivered by tank trucks from these two provinces. But considering the limited number of available tank trucks, the longer road distance, and the road and traffic conditions, the existing truck fleet will not be able to accommodate the current volume requirements. It is expected that the North and South Luzon Expressways will be congested with 40 additional tank trucks every 30 minutes. Imagine that many trucks adding to the traffic on the already congested narrow streets of Metro Manila.
- More than half of the 459 service stations in Metro Manila will be forced to shut down. The cost of fuel will not only rise, it will have to be rationed. Vehicles will have to line up for hours to be able to buy fuel. Those at the tail end will not get any.
- The shortage and unreliability of supply will cause massive disruptions to economic and industrial activities, resulting in loss of jobs and reduction in government tax revenues.
- The supply of fuel to airlines and shipping companies will be considerably reduced and will greatly adversely affect travel and trade.
- The shortage of chemicals will impact on the cost of paints, thinners, rubbing alcohol, adhesives, foam, packaging and printing materials.
- The fuel requirements of the military and the police will also be greatly affected.
- Finally, the convoy of supply trucks will be easily vulnerable to terrorist attack throughout the long distance that it will have to travel. Thus, what the Court is trying to avoid in closing down the Pandacan depot—the risk of a terrorist attack—will be multiplied instead. The long lines of trucks loaded with highly combustible liquids will just be too tempting to terrorists.

Still, we cannot let the situation continue. For as long as the storage tanks remain in the middle of a densely populated city and a tempting target for terrorists, a clear and present danger exists. Something has to be done. The depot has to be relocated where it will not pose a danger. But where?

The oil companies said there are no viable alternative sites. But even if they find one, won't people eventually settle close to it, as what happened in Pandacan? The depot used to be in the middle of nowhere, away from residential communities. But settlers moved progressively closer so it and it is now surrounded by a densely populated community. Won't the same thing happen to a new site? So where is the ideal "safe place"?

In the middle of Manila Bay, where it would be near the customers, and easily accessible to supply ships, but far enough to pose any hazard to residential communities. And it would be easy to secure.

Manila Harbour Centre has been proposed but some say it is still too near the methane-saturated Smokey Mountain, which can go up in flames should a nearby fuel depot catch fire.

The ideal solution is to reclaim another island for the terminals. But this will take time. Which is the point of this column. Give the oil companies enough time to relocate properly. Anything done in haste turns up bugs. Ordinance 8119, which replaced Ordinance 8027, gives the oil companies seven years to transfer. Even that may not be enough if a whole new island is to be reclaimed. But the Supreme Court has ordered the enforcement of Ordinance 8027, not knowing this has already been repealed by Ordinance 8119.

The oil companies have already filed a motion for reconsideration.

Finally

There's the Rub

Conrado de Quiros

RAUL GONZALEZ IS LIVID (IN MORE WAYS than one). "That is blackmail," he says of the American threat to stop military aid to this country if the extrajudicial killings do not stop. "(The US Senate foreign relations hearing) is one-sided because the complainants were all heard but we were not heard .... That is already making a judgment that all our efforts are not sincere."

What's batty about that statement is, well, what's not about anything Gonzalez says? Batty is his middle name. But at the very least what's so about his claim of US meddling in our affairs and even blackmailing us is its breathtaking selectiveness in perception.

Only a couple of years ago, his namesake, Norberto Gonzales, was in fact begging the United States to please intervene in the most basic of our affairs, in changing our Charter. Indeed, he wasn't just begging for it, he was proposing to pay an American firm, Venable LLP, a fortune to lobby the US Congress into doing so. The US Senate foreign relations hearing merely upholds a universal principle that crosses borders, which is the preciousness of life, the transgression of which constitutes a crime against humanity. Norberto's initiative would have trashed a principle cherished by the community of nations, which is the preciousness of sovereignty, the transgression of which constitutes intervention—and, for those who initiate it from within, treason. Well, Banana (Republic) is Norberto's middle name. My profoundest apologies to bananas (and republics).

I do not recall that Raul was stoked to his usual irascibility by that object lesson in "How To Betray Your Country."

What idiocy to suggest the hearing is biased. I don't know which is more idiotic, that or GMA's comment about the Political and Economic Risk Consultancy's ranking of the Philippines as the most corrupt country in all of Asia being the handiwork of the opposition. It's not just that this government used every opportunity to trumpet its side while stifling the voices of the victims or their kin by threat and intimidation. It's also that its very own Melo Commission has produced the same findings: It has tagged the military as the culprit in the killings and suggested GMA's culpability in them.

Ignacio Bunye himself insists his favorite government "really condemns these unexplained killings and is prepared to do whatever is necessary (to) stop these atrocities." Pray, how in God's, or Satan's, name can you be prepared to do what is necessary to stop these atrocities when you're not even prepared to believe the word of the commission you formed to investigate them?

More than that, there's something deeply pathological about these official excoriations of the US Senate foreign relations hearing. It's as if having gotten away with lying repeatedly to Filipinos, GMA's officials expect to get the same results from foreigners. It's as if GMA having passed off calling a Comelec official in the heat of canvassing—demanding to win by a million votes and agreeing to the kidnapping of a public school teacher while at it—as a "lapse in judgment," her officials expect to pass off the wholesale slaughter of journalists and political activists as a lapse in vigilance. If they're not in denial, it is only because they've come to believe their own lies after self-hypnotic suggestions like "Satur Ocampo did it ... Satur Ocampo did it ...." "The Butler" is Ocampo's middle name.

As for the rest of us, the US Senate foreign relations hearing can only be a shaft of light in pitch darkness. It couldn't have come at a better time, which is when Norberto Gonzales is trying to muddle the issue by resurrecting the NPA "killing fields" and pinning the blame for the runaway mayhem on the communists. Indeed, which is when this country is lapsing not just into another long stupor but into a state of zombie-ness. We're now pretty much the living dead, having learned to accept not just lying, cheating and stealing as the natural course of human affairs but also murder as a natural instrument of national policy.

The US Senate hearing should jolt us back into wakefulness. It puts things in their right perspective: The NPA is not killing the Bayan Muna leaders, the AFP is. Satur Ocampo is not guilty of murder by command responsibility, Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo is.

I knew Eduardo Ermita was whistling in the dark when he first reacted to the news that the US Congress was looking into the mayhem, dismissing it as something the United States did routinely. Not so. Until November last year, that couldn't have happened at all. The monumental event that changed things was the Democrats sweeping the Republicans off both houses of the US Congress. The new Speaker of the House in particular, Nancy Pelosi, the first American woman to become so, is big on human rights and was among those who loudly railed at Marcos' murderousness then. The US Congress' criticism of the GMA regime will not taper off over the next few months, it will become more strident.

But, Jesus, it all feels like we've fallen into a time warp, back into the time of Marcos, when we're waiting for the US government to take the lead in restoring democracy to this country. But having campaigned ardently for a stop to the killings, even conscripting musicians into a bar tour for it, and almost giving up on the prospect of this country being stoked to fury over its journalists and political activists being butchered like chickens, I'll take my blessings where I can get them. I applaud the US position to condemn the killings and lay the blame where the blame is due.

If that is meddling, then I personally want to beg the United States to meddle some more. If only to remind us what freedom is. If only to remind us what democracy is.

If only to remind us what a miracle life is.

A letter to the Holy Father

SOUNDING BOARD

Fr. Joaquin G. Bernas, S.J.

NO, I DID NOT COMMUNICATE WITH THE HOLY Father. Rather, I have been furnished a copy of a letter asking His Holiness to educate the members of the hierarchy about their duty not to get mixed up in political matters. I will not mention the names of the purported letter-writers because I did not bother to verify the signatures. Besides, my interest is not in the authorship but in the content of the letter.

The letter implicitly admits what I have always maintained, namely that there is nothing in the Constitution to prevent bishops and priests from getting involved in politics. The free exercise clause and the prohibition of religious tests for the exercise of political rights take care of that. As to separation of Church and State, the constitutional command is addressed to the State and not to the church. Thus, the writers have appealed instead to the authority of the Pope over bishops and priests.

In other words, you might call it a form of "forum shopping" which lawyers are not allowed to do in secular litigation. But forum shopping is strategically appropriate in the case of the letter-writers because the letter is dated Jan. 10, 2007, or weeks after the Oct. 25, 2006 and Nov. 21, 2006 Supreme Court pronouncements junking the initiative and referendum petition for the revision of the Constitution. If you can't win it in one forum, try another one! The Ginebra team would call that the "Never Say Die!" spirit.

What did the letter say? It said that the current reform drive involves a shift from presidential to parliamentary, electoral and political reforms, more autonomy leading to federalism, and economic liberalization. All these may have been contained in the report of the Preparatory Committee formed by President Macapagal-Arroyo, but even the House of Representatives simply chose to "archive" it, which is a polite way of filing it in a circular cabinet.

In fact, however, the main drive has been for a shift from a presidential to a parliamentary form of government—first, through initiative and referendum (which the Supreme Court declared to be not constitutionally allowed); and second, through a unilateral act of the House of Representatives (which the House itself abandoned as absurd). The letter wanted the Holy Father to tell the bishops not to oppose a movement which the Court itself had declared illegal and which the House had abandoned in the face of opposition by the Senate. Do you really expect the Holy Father to pay attention to such a letter?

If you look at the draft of the House and the draft for initiative and referendum, the only reforms included in them are the shift from presidential to parliamentary and some political reform leading to the extension of the term of the current power holders and the strengthening of the President.

To bolster the thrust of the letter, the writers quote from the recent Encyclical of Benedict XVI, "Deus est Caritas." But what they quote is supportive of the action taken by the hierarchy: "**A just society must be the achievement of politics, not of the Church. Yet the promotion of justice through efforts to bring openness of mind and will to the demands of the common good is something which concerns the Church deeply.**" There you have it. What the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines has been doing through its pronouncements and exhortations is "**to bring about openness of mind and will**" of all, including those of the letter-writers.

The letter-writers next quote "Deus est Caritas" again as saying that "**the formation of structures is not directly the duty of the Church . . . . The Church has an indirect duty . . . to contribute to the purification of reason and to the reawakening of the moral forces without which just structures are neither established nor prove effective in the long run.**" This is what the CBCP has been doing: performing its duty **to contribute to the purification of reason and to the reawakening of the moral forces without which just structures are neither established nor prove effective in the long run.**"

The writers also quote a passage from "The Social Doctrine of the Church" (I am not sure which document this is) which says that the "Church has no particular area of competence concerning the structures of the political community." True enough; but, aside from the fact that quite a number of churchmen have placed their own competence in the social and political fields of learning in the service of the Church, we cannot overlook the duty of the Church "to contribute to the purification of reason and to the reawakening of the moral forces without which just structures are neither established nor prove effective in the long run."

"Gaudium et Spes," the pastoral letter of Vatican II on "The Role of the Church in the Modern World" puts it clearly: "**Christ, to be sure, gave His Church no proper mission in the political, economic or social order. The purpose which He set before her is a religious one. But out of this religious mission itself comes a function, a light and an energy which can serve to structure and consolidate the human community according to the divine law. As a matter of fact, when circumstances of time and place produce the need, she can and indeed should initiate activities on behalf of all men, especially those designed for the needy, such as the works of mercy and similar undertakings.**" We are in those "**circumstances of time and place**" which cry for action by the Church.

Do not expect Benedict XVI to revise "Gaudium et Spes" on the basis of a forum-shopping letter.

Witch-hunting

KRIS-CROSSING MINDANAO

Antonio J. Montalvan II

IT IS OF NO SURPRISE TO ME THAT, THIS BEING the election season, my mailbox gets inundated with press releases of senatorial candidates who wish that they be granted the spin that would bring them closer to their ambition. The past week was particularly amusing. All the political mail had something to say about the arrest of Satur Ocampo. All, without exception, were senatorial candidates of Team Unity. All were against Ocampo's arrest.

I suspect that part of the mail meant to apologize for the Arroyo administration, whose popularity rating has sagged even lower following a number of decisions it made that tend to reinforce its hawkish image. Which also leaves me wondering why no mail from Genuine Opposition candidates, defending Ocampo, have reached me so far. Is it because once they are in power, being of the same socio-economic political mold, they will do the same thing?

But regardless of whether the mail are political or not, I will always have a special regard for the man. Many years ago, my family and I played host to Satur and Bobbie Ocampo in our home in Cagayan de Oro. The couple, then already active human rights advocates, were on their way to Surigao del Sur to take part in a fact-finding mission looking into a case of human rights abuse. Except for what I heard about them from the media, I did not personally know Satur and Bobbie from Adam.

NGO friends of mine had requested me to take the couple as family guests for an overnight stay, before their long and (what was then) a bumpy land trip to Surigao del Sur.

I had only one indelible impression of the couple: What you see in media is what you get. Satur and Bobbie, up close, are a refined couple. In that brief encounter with them, I found them unpretentious. They never showed the airs of media-conscious celebrities. Even then, having just gotten out of detention, they were easily front-page copies.

Contrary to the "firebrand communist" image that some people, like Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez, would like to frame for Ocampo in the public eye, the latter never really steered any of our conversations toward a discussion about his ideological leanings. In fact, Ocampo and wife appeared to me as just simple folks who carried on conversations with my family about mundane matters that any family would ordinarily discuss and which would not have been of interest to snooping intelligence agents.

Nevertheless, when I asked Satur for his political opinions, it was easy for me to see that this was a man who was profound in his simplicity, never making speculative assumptions, and who merely cared for a government that should have respected human dignity even then. Never for a moment did he make an attempt at "agit-prop." In fact, he appeared to be more proletarian than his French-educated better-half.

I am not about to join the league of *trapo* politicians who are readily jumping into wagons to make political mileage out of Satur's arrest. Unlike them, I have no agenda. What bothers me is, many years after that memorable encounter with the Ocampo couple in our family abode, things have not changed. I looked forward then that the restrictive political climate obtaining during their visit, in particular with respect to the human rights abuses, would have loosened up years after, to say the least, and society would have become a marketplace of ideas where one could hold one's own without fear or favor.

We are back, without doubt, to the era of witch-hunting which made many lives miserable during the Marcos dictatorship. We are back to an era of mistrust which does not help and strengthen our efforts at nation-building. We are back to an age of repression. And something in me tells me that this is an era we must all dread, especially for us who lived through the long nights of Marcos dictatorship.

I will not even say anything about the hilariousness of what appear to be trumped-up charges against Satur Ocampo (his being responsible for mass killings in faraway Southern Leyte, albeit I know the matter is not a hilarious one). This government fiction—probably the handiwork of literary writers and movie scribes of dubious skills and abilities—is certainly not amusing to many of us. But one thing is clear: arresting Satur Ocampo is the surest way to engender the birth of more Satur Ocampos.

In this we have remained infantile. The Arroyo administration and its military hawks, who do not seem to remember the past, must be reminded of the warning on history repeating itself.

A government terrorized by the power of the mind is a government that fears its shadow.

* * *

Comments to monta@cu-cdo.edu.ph

Radical yet firmly legal

THE LONG VIEW

Manuel L. Quezon III

ALFREDO SAULO, IN HIS PRE-MARTIAL LAW series on the Communist Party, pointed out that the organization had been outlawed twice. The first time was by order of the courts, beginning with a decision by Judge Mariano Albert in Manila on Sept. 14, 1931. The decision was unanimously upheld by the Supreme Court on Oct. 26, 1932, resulting in 20 communist leaders being sentenced to eight years and one day of "destierro" or banishment to the provinces. The American communist James Allen, in pursuit of a united front policy against fascism, asked Malacañang to lift the internal exile. His request was granted on Dec. 31, 1936. Absolute pardon was granted on Christmas Eve, 1938.

Thereafter, while the Court's decision declaring the Communist Party legal remained in force, the executive branch issued instructions to local officials to allow the holding of public meetings and demonstrations regardless of the party affiliations of the participants. The government's policy bore fruit when, early in December 1941, the combined communist and socialist parties (united since 1938) pledged loyalty to the government in its fight against the Japanese.

The Partido Komunista ng Pilipinas' efforts to engage in mainstream politics resulted in its supporting the candidacy of President Sergio Osmeña Sr., by backing the Democratic Alliance which allied with the Nacionalista Party. The Democratic Alliance-backed presidential candidate lost, but six DA candidates were elected to the House: Luis Taruc and Amado Yuzon in Pampanga, Jesus Lava in Bulacan, Jose Cando and Constancio Padilla in Nueva Ecija and Alejandro Simpauco in Tarlac. They weren't permitted to take their seats, and an NP congressman, Alejo Santos (also of Bulacan), and three NP senators, Ramon Diokno, Jose Vera and Jose Romero, were also denied their seats on the basis of their allegedly committing "fraud and terrorism."

The Supreme Court, according to Saulo, later decided that the expulsion of the senators and congressmen had nothing to do with fraud or terrorism, and had everything to do with their dissenting votes that would have derailed the passage of the Parity Amendment Act in Congress. Nevertheless, when President Roxas appealed for communists to cooperate with the government, three leading members of the PKP, Taruc, Mateo del Castillo and Juan Feleo, campaigned in Pampanga, Bulacan and Nueva Ecija, respectively, for the peasantry to remain peaceful. The leaders were even provided with bodyguards from the armed forces.

On Aug. 24, 1946, while visiting Cabiao, Nueva Ecija, to inquire into the shelling of nearby barrios by the Army, Feleo was abducted by armed men in military fatigues and killed. By March 6, 1948, President Roxas had proclaimed the Hukbalahap and the PKM (a farmers' union) outlaw organizations; President Quirino, on the other hand, tried offering amnesty on June 21, 1948; but by August that year, negotiations had broken down. By the presidential elections of 1949, the Huks had abandoned mainstream politics altogether.

But notice that the focus of government was on the armed component of the PKP, not the PKP itself. Outlawing the Communist Party itself would come after its armed component had basically been crushed in the field in 1954 (see my column, "Why revolts fail," May 1, 2006, for the Huk leaders' analysis of why their revolt was crushed). On June 20, 1957, President Carlos P. Garcia signed Republic Act 1700 or the Anti-Subversion Law. It proclaimed the PKP, the Hukbalahap and "any successors of such organizations" illegal.

That law remained in the statute books until the Ramos administration. By that time, the PKP and the Huks had fallen by the wayside; a newer offshoot, the Maoist Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP—this is the official name in English that sets it apart from its predecessor) and the New People's Army (NPA, in contrast to the "old" army, the Huks) has proven more durable than its Stalinist predecessor. While at times it was the only organized opposition to martial law, it missed out on playing a central role in the 1986 snap election or the Edsa revolution; and for all the CPP-NPA's avowals against American imperialism, it was the Philippine Senate that engineered the end of a century of American military bases in the country.

Ramos could thus feel confident that at no time since before World War II had radicalism seemed so pointless; not just in the Philippines but in a world still in awe of the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe.

Joel Rocamora, not a man beloved by present-day supporters of the CPP-NPA, wrote "Breaking Through: The Struggle Within the Communist Party of the Philippines," at a time when dissent within radical circles was accompanied by an opening up of traditional politics to radical participation. In that book, Rocamora writes that "it was the CPP that gave birth to the NDF in 1973."

Rocamora points out though: "But the NDF is not the CPP with a glossy cover. 'Front' does not mean 'façade' ... The NDF can only be understood within the context of the CPP's attempt to deal with the complex ... problem of building a united front ... it is the main arena from where the CPP goes outside of itself .... The fact that the NDF founding congress was not held until 1990, 17 years after the first NDF program was released, is one measure of these difficulties." This was his way of pointing out that it's wrong to assume that aboveground parties and the radical underground associated with them are identical to each other.

At a time when the AFP chief of staff issues fire-breathing demands to revive the Anti-Subversion Law, we have to keep these nuances in mind. As he marks another birthday, Fidel Ramos should be speaking up to preserve the democratic space he helped expand, but which is now diminishing by the day.

Throw away P500?

FIRST OF ALL, MY PERSONAL CONGRATULATIONS TO the members of Philippine Military Academy, class of 2007, who are graduating this morning in ceremonies at Fort Del Pilar, Baguio City. Special salutations go to Cadet First Class Andrelee Mojica for finishing at the top of her class, only the third female to do so since the academy opened its doors to women in 1997.

REVEILLE

Ramon J. Farolan

How things have changed at my Alma Mater! When we were cadets oh so many years ago, we used to roll our eyes at the sight of pretty young girls watching us at formation. Today, they make up a significant and proud element of the corps, although one would find it difficult to distinguish between the males and the females in their working uniforms.

* * *

As I mentioned in my last column, former Chief Justice Hilario Davide Jr., our Permanent Representative to the United Nations, was elected by acclamation as vice president of the 54-member Economic and Social Council (Ecosoc) of the UN. This belies earlier reports that he would not get the post occupied by his predecessor.

* * *

For the past two weeks, I have dwelt on the issue of the senior citizens' discount on purchases made with the credit card. Have you ever wondered why, all these years, this issue was left unresolved?

Let me make a few conjectures.

First, the rich and affluent sector of our society couldn't care less about a 20-percent discount on their medicine and restaurant expenses. For them, this is a drop in the bucket. Yes, many of them have senior citizen IDs because their age entitles them to one. But I doubt if they ever actually use them; after all, they have secretaries or gofers and all sorts of assistants who take care of buying their medicines and paying their bills. In fact, they probably don't carry their senior citizen IDs in their Prada, or in their Louis Vuitton or Gucci wallets.

Second, some government officials who are senior citizens and who probably occupy the top ranks of the bureaucracy may have overlooked this issue. In theory, because of their positions in government, one would think they would be in the best position to help out on such an important matter affecting the aging citizens' health and quality of life. But most likely, these officials have access to all kinds of representation expenses, confidential or intelligence funds, or other discretionary subsidies. There is no pressing need for them to use senior citizen IDs for discount purposes. As with the rich and affluent, they have their executive assistants, aides and gofers who attend to paying their bills in restaurants and five-star establishments.

It is actually the ordinary, average middle- and lower-income citizens who are left alone to call the attention of government to their plight and to insist that their lawful benefits and entitlements be respected by business.

After having our credit cards accepted with the full 20-percent discount intact, the next objective is to ensure that the 20-percent computation is based on what is just and fair for the senior citizen and not on what the establishment decides is the correct basis.

Last week, I had the pleasure of sitting down with two officials of the Department of Trade and Industry: Undersecretary Zenaida Maglaya, a 20-year veteran of the department who rose through the ranks, starting in provincial offices; and Director Victorio Dimagiba of the Bureau of Trade Regulations and Consumer Protection. In my earlier talks with Trade Secretary Peter Favila, he referred me to these officials for further discussions on the problems of not just senior citizens but also of consumers in general who feel that they have been victims of unfair trade practices. (The meeting reminded me of my own days in government, when I would spend a lot of time attending inter-agency meetings at the DTI, variously chaired by Bobby Ongpin, Joe Concepcion and Peter Garrucho.)

For purposes of our meeting, I saved the official receipts given to me by several restaurants as well as by Mercury Drug store. The receipts showed that there were different formulas used in computing the 20-percent discount for senior citizens. Some counted in the 12-percent VAT, the service charge and other taxes before computing the discount. Others used as basis only the base figure, the cost of food and beverages. In the case of medicines, it was a complicated computation. Depending on what formula was used, one could easily save from P500 to P1,000 a month on medicine and food. Why would anyone throw away that much?

There is an urgent need for the concerned government agencies to get together and come up with a uniform and fair "discount formula" for medicines and food items, keeping in mind that the 20-percent discount of senior citizens has already been severely eroded by the imposition of the 12-percent EVAT. Politicians have been offering various proposals to increase the senior citizens' discount but this will take years before anything concrete is accomplished.

What we need is immediate action, to alleviate the plight of senior citizens. Fortunately, Undersecretary Maglaya and Director Dimagiba assured me that this problem will be resolved promptly. It is hoped that we shall be hearing from them soon.

Population statistics indicate that the life span of Filipinos, male and female, has greatly improved over the years. This means that barring accidental death, the vast majority of our people will live to be senior citizens. Let us therefore help each other by raising our voices in this effort to assure senior citizens their dues. This initiative will benefit not just the present crop of seniors but all succeeding generations as well.

THEY SAID

Shades of the past

"I think it's something that should not take place. But if I remember correctly, even during the time of Cory (President Aquino), there was a hearing in the US Congress where Filipinos testified. There is a precedent, we sent a delegation to the US to testify on human rights. There are people in the country who are dragging the Philippines [before the US Congress] for their own propaganda purposes."

—Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez on the US Congress' move to conduct hearings on the political killings in the Philippines

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A nation amusing itself to death

MICHAEL DEFENSOR'S ENLISTMENT Of Boy Abunda's help in his senatorial bid (INQUIRER, 2/2/07) is a clear indication that the coming elections will be, again, an occasion for merry-making.

Defensor and Abunda somehow represent the new breed of political and entertainment celebrities. Defensor, of Spice Boys fame, has a quick wit, boyish charm and cool temperament. Abunda, on the other hand, leapt to fame primarily because of his rare, extraordinary skills at using interviews as an "imaginary mirror" and, of course, because of his excellent record in managing talents. Defensor is admired because of his youthfulness and vibrancy while Abunda is famous for his way of asking questions.

It is no surprise therefore for someone like Defensor employing Abunda for his image build-up. The former must have realized that the latter's "gift of gab" and "star-making" power would help him notch a senatorial seat.

What is interesting in this kind of partnership is that it reaffirms the perception that there is a very thin line that separates politics and entertainment. The blurring of lines between these two supposedly different arenas can be problematic as it can lead society to accept triviality and artificiality as norms.

The collusion between politicians and image-makers has become so intense that one can no longer distinguish the serious from the sassy. When there is blurring of the lines, the "instrumentalization" of one by the other becomes inevitable and—while the partnership may work for their benefit with both enjoying its fruits—in the end, the Filipino people will only have to themselves the leftovers.

But so what? Are we not entertained with the sight of politicians gyrating with starlets in plazas or bouncing to the tune of "boom-tarat-tarat" in the capitol? Are we not, to borrow the words of Neil Postman, amusing ourselves to death?

—DANTE D. PEREZ,
dantedperez@yahoo.com

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Starving beneficiaries of 'survivor's pension'

SINCE 2006, MY FATHER HAS BEEN A recipient of a GSIS survivor's pension, which is due every fifth day of the month. However, he has yet to receive his pension checks for January 2007 and February 2007.

On Jan. 4, 2007, my father followed up his January 2007 pension with the Government Service Insurance System office in General Santos City, but his check was not yet ready because, he was told, he had to renew his ID, a requirement he complied with. Despite this compliance, he still hasn't received his January 2007 pension to this day.

So he went back to GSIS-General Santos City, only to be advised to apply for an ATM account with Unionbank and to return after one week. Again, he complied with the "requirements," hoping that this would facilitate the release of his pension. But his compliance turned out to be a futile exercise. He made several follow-ups, but the GSIS could not give any reason for the delay of his pension and neither could it give an assurance as to when the same would be released.

My father is now 74 years old and he has to travel two hours just to follow-up his survivor's pension. Worse, he is suffering from liver sclerosis, and this is why he relies so much on his small pension for his medication.

I find it very disgusting that the government and the GSIS are so insensitive to the plight of pensioners. Adding insult to injury, the GSIS is reportedly planning to invest 30 percent of its assets abroad. (INQUIRER, 1/27/07) It will be a shame for the GSIS to make such an investment when it ignores its pensioners here at home and leaves them starving to death.

"Survivor's pension"? I hope the GSIS can find time to enlighten us on what these words mean.

—SYLVIA G. REGANIT,
23 Pink St., Dacoville,
Dumoy, Davao City

Comelec a party to militarization

THE PROMOTION OF CHURCH People's Response (PCPR) adds its voice to those of multi-sectoral groups crying foul over the warrant of arrest issued against Bayan Muna Rep. Satur Ocampo for mass murder.

In our view, the real murderers are those in the halls of power who are afraid of Bayan Muna's politics of change. They are the ones who must be arrested and prosecuted for abducting and killing (and threatening to kill) hundreds of leaders and members of Bayan Muna and other cause-oriented groups.

We condemn the persecution of Ocampo and other activists no less than the deployment of military troops in urban and rural communities, and even in schools, to actively campaign against Bayan Muna and other progressive party-list groups. We also join the clamor to free Anakpawis Rep. Crispin Beltran who was unjustly arrested, on the basis of fabricated evidence, for rebellion.

The PCPR also condemns the Commission on Elections for acting in concert with the PNP and AFP and approving the deployment of military troops in urban communities. The Comelec effectively gave its blessings to the military campaign against the party-list groups that have been critical of the Arroyo administration.

In the face of the escalating repression against the progressive party-list groups, the Comelec again refuses to stop the military from electioneering and committing serious violations of election laws, particularly the rule on non-partisanship.

We church people have worked with Bayan Muna on worthy causes and people's issues, such as the repeal of the mining law, against new taxes and for wage hike. We will continue to support Bayan Muna's politics of change as we demand an immediate end to the systematic killing and harassment of leaders and members of the progressive party-list groups that truly champion the people's rights and welfare.

—FR. JERRY SABADO, OCarm,
spokesperson,
Promotion of Church
People's Response (PCPR),
879 Edsa, Quezon City 1101

Veterans cautioned on fixers

THIS OFFICE HAS BEEN PERSISTENTLY receiving numerous reports that scam artists and "fixers" are offering their "services" to help 80- to 90-year-old Filipino World War II veterans, or their spouses, widows and descendants complete or finalize documents for the release of monthly "equity" pensions from the US government.

Another persistent complaint—from children and grandchildren of World War II veterans—is that these unscrupulous fixers are also offering their "services"—in exchange for cash—so that descendants of World War II veterans can "immigrate" to the United States.

We wish to inform all members of the veterans sector that:

1. Although the "Veterans Equity Bill of 2007" is currently pending in the US Congress and went through first hearing last Feb. 15 in the US House of Representatives, this has not yet been approved by Congress or signed into law by US President Bush. Thus, there are no "monthly equity pensions from the US government" to speak of.

2. Although there has been talk about a proposed new "Family Reunification Bill" for the benefit of descendants of Filipino World War II veterans, it has not yet, to our knowledge, been filed in the US Congress, much less has it undergone any congressional hearings. Furthermore, an initial study of the bill shows that its intention is to grant immigration rights only to the direct family members of Filipino World War II veterans already residing in, or citizens of the United States.

Our World War II veterans and their family members should avoid sweet-talking con artists and fixers who take unholy and immoral advantage of their advanced age and weakened physical condition. Veterans are welcome to make inquiries on these matters at this office. Veterans are also urged to report to this office the activities of these scam artists and fixers. President Macapagal-Arroyo, the daughter of a World War II veteran, will not tolerate any disrespectful act that victimizes and dishonors our World War II veterans who fought for and gave us the very freedom and democracy we enjoy today.

—JESUS TERRY FERRER
ADEVOSO,
assistant secretary,
Presidential Assistant for
Veterans Affairs,
Office of the President,
Malacañang, Manila

Misrepresentation, cause for alarm

THIS IS A REACTION TO THE news report titled "Farmers' group casts doubt on plan to pool coco levy." (INQUIRER, 2/25/07) The so-called national convention of coconut farmers, which was organized by the Bishops, Ulama, Priests, Pastors, Farmers and Lumad Conference (Buppfaluc) and held in Davao, was rather a "bizarre" event, given that it was held as the nation was commemorating the Edsa People Power Revolution, which was a defiant stand against dictatorship and cronyism.

The sponsors and organizers of the convention claimed they were just helping the coconut farmers to have access to the coconut levy funds. In reality, they are pushing for a compromise deal between the coconut farmers and Eduardo "Danding" Cojuangco Jr., a known crony of former President Ferdinand Marcos and allegedly among those behind the coco levy scam.

Why pursue a compromise agreement when the Sandiganbayan already passed a ruling that the coco levy funds are held "in trust" for all coconut farmers? Such a deal will only negate the judicial victories of the small coconut farmers.

What the government should pursue now is the issuance of the writ of execution that the Office of the Solicitor General has petitioned before the Sandiganbayan.

The convention organizers also claimed that there is no opposition to the compromise agreement. A blatant lie. The Buppfaluc is fully aware that a large number of small coconut farmers are against the compromise agreement that it has been peddling since last year.

Buppfaluc's claim that the farmers have reached a "consensus" on the compromise agreement is gross misrepresentation and exposes the sinister motives of those pushing for the agreement. Their assurance that the coconut levy funds will be distributed expeditiously through a compromise agreement becomes even more suspect in the light of the upcoming elections. The promise of money that coincides with the start of a campaign period is cause for alarm.

—OMI ROYANDOYAN,
executive director,
Centro Saka Inc., PSSC Bldg.,
Commonwealth Ave.,
Diliman, Quezon City

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Filipino war vets forced to live far from families

WAIANAE, HAWAII—MANUEL S. Pablo crouched in foxholes to defend the Philippines against invading Japanese soldiers during World War II. He watched a Japanese guard stab one of his comrades to death with a bayonet during the Bataan Death March when the starving prisoner of war dared to ask for another bowl of rice.

Even though Pablo risked his life for the United States, which controlled the Philippines as a commonwealth at the time, his children cannot win approval to live with him in America during his retirement.

Scholars and veteran advocates say the policy reflects decades of neglect, dating to 1946 when Washington broke wartime promises that Filipino soldiers could become US citizens and enjoy the same pension and medical benefits as American troops.

20 years waiting

It took Washington 45 years after the war to offer veterans a proper chance to obtain citizenship. And the Immigration Act of 1990 only allowed each veteran to bring one immediate family member to the United States with them, forcing most to leave their children behind.

The shortcomings of that law have left the sons and daughters of the veterans with no choice but to get in line for immigration visas along with everyone else. On average, they must wait about 20 years because so many Filipinos hope to emigrate and the limits are set by nationality.

Pablo's three sons and four daughters have been on the waiting list since 1994, two years after he immigrated to Hawaii and became a US citizen.

Today, thousands of elderly veterans—including those wounded in battle and awarded the Bronze Star and other medals—are forced to live their last years far from their children and grandchildren.

Sen. Daniel K. Akaka, a Hawaii Democrat, this year reintroduced a bill to remedy the situation. The proposed legislation seeks to allow children of Filipino World War II veterans to sidestep the immigration waiting list.

"The promise back then was, 'Hey, you're going to become American citizens and you'll get full benefits.' After the war ended, for some reason, the US reneged on that promise," said Jon Yoshimura, an Akaka spokesperson.

Optimistic

The proposed measure died last year when it was included in a large omnibus immigration bill that was derailed by disagreements over a border fence and making English the national language.

But Akaka is optimistic the US Senate will pass the reunification legislation this year, according to Yoshimura. The Senate veterans affairs committee, which Akaka chairs, plans to hold hearings on the issue next month coinciding with the 65th anniversary of the Bataan Death March on April 9.

Pablo enlisted in the Philippine Scouts, a US Army unit, after a recruiting truck drove through his hometown in the province of Ilocos Norte.

RP veterans dumped

When the Imperial Japanese Army invaded on Dec. 8, 1941, Pablo and his fellow soldiers dug foxholes to fight against troops shooting at them from the jungle. He recalls hunkering down between the corpses of fallen comrades, using their bodies to shield himself from bullets.

Other Filipinos formed the resistance against Japanese troops after US forces surrendered at Bataan and Gen. Douglas MacArthur withdrew to Australia uttering the famous phrase "I shall return."

Belinda Aquino, a University of Hawaii political science professor, said the United States "dumped" Filipino veterans after World War II. Their cause then struggled in the postwar years as the United States focused on fighting communism.

"The Philippines was just not an important priority for the US," Aquino said.

Pablo could live in the Philippines near his children. But he prefers to live in the United States where he can access the medical care he needs at veterans' hospitals.

More urgent

He still takes medicine and receives therapy for post-traumatic stress disorder. The war memories from six decades ago still haunt him today.

"When he gets nightmares, he's shaking. He's saying 'Can you cover my face? They are coming,'" said his wife Fely Pablo. "He says 'The Japanese are coming!'"

Veterans and their backers say the need to reunite divided families only grows more urgent given the advancing age of the veterans.

There are as many as over 50,000 Filipino veterans of World War II alive today. Some 10,000 are said to live in the United States, including 2,000 in Hawaii. Most are in their 70s and 80s.

Abelina Madrid Shaw, a Honolulu attorney and an advocate for Filipino veterans, said US lawmakers and the media seemed to be paying more attention to the issue lately, perhaps because the United States is again at war.

"One cannot help but think, if they're treating our Filipino veterans this way, are they going to be treating those who go to war today like that?" Shaw said. "That's pretty shabby." *AP*

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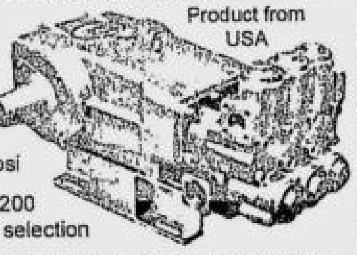

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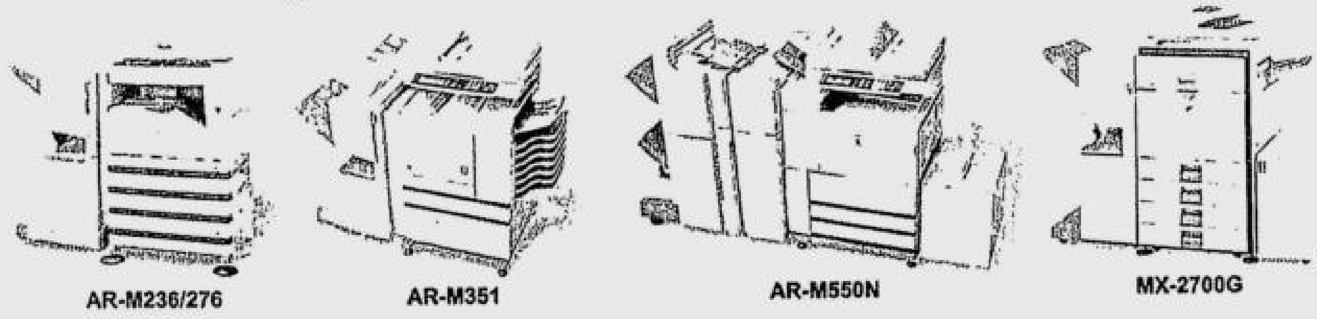

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The Board of Foreign Service Examinations of the Department of Foreign Affairs announces the holding of the –

FOREIGN SERVICE OFFICER (FSO) EXAMINATION

to recruit candidates for appointment to the position of Foreign Service Officer Class IV (FSO IV).

The Examination is composed of three (3) parts which will be held on the following dates:

Qualifying Test:	6 May 2007
Written Examination:	22, 23 and 24 August 2007
Oral Examination:	To be determined at a later date

IMPORTANT:

(1) Application forms and relevant information regarding the examination may be downloaded from the Department of Foreign Affairs website (**www.dfa.gov.ph**). Forms may also be obtained personally or requested through mail from the following offices of the Department of Foreign Affairs:

DFA Main Office: Board of Foreign Service Examinations, Department of Foreign Affairs, DFA Building, 2330 Roxas Boulevard, Pasay City ° Tels. (02) 834-3080, 834-3083 ° Fax (02) 551-5976

DFA RCO Lucena: 3rd Floor, Pacific Mall Lucena, M.L. Tagarao St., Barangay III, Lucena City ° Tels. (042) 710-4526 ° Fax (042) 373-1898 ° Email: dfarcolc@pldtdsl.net

DFA Mindanao and DFA RCO Davao City: Ebro-Pelayo Building, E. Jacinto Street, Davao City ° Tels. (082) 227-3900, 224-4885, 227-0713 ° Fax (082) 221-4552, 227-0712 ° Email: davaorco@ultimate.info.com.ph, davaorco@yahoo.com

DFA RCO Cagayan de Oro: Geleng Building, Lapasan Highway, Cagayan de Oro City ° Tels. (08822) 724-309, 857-2175 ° Fax (08822) 726-578 ° Email: cagayan_deoro@dfa.gov.ph, rco@cdo.webling.com

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(2) Application forms may also be obtained from the Regional Offices of the Civil Service Commission.

(3) Completed application forms together with the documentary requirements must be returned to any of the DFA Regional Consular Offices enumerated above not later than **20 April 2007**, or to the DFA Main Office not later than **25 April 2007**, for evaluation and processing.

Botika ng Bayan sells cheaper drugs

From page A1

Bayan outlet, a program of the government-owned Philippine International Trading Corp. aimed at providing cheaper but equally efficacious medicines and at halving the prices of commonly bought drugs in three years.

Launched in December 2004, Botika ng Bayan imports medicine mainly from India and Pakistan but also carries local branded generic drugs. Most of the imported medicine are for asthma, hypertension and diabetes.

Through the Botika project, a network of privately-run drugstores would be set up to sell products guaranteed by the Department of Health and the Bureau of Food and Drugs.

With her husband already retired, Silverio, who is working on commission basis for St. Peter Life Plan, tries to make ends meet in light of their need for medicines.

Aside from Euglocon, which retails for P10 to P11 a capsule, Silverio buys Nifedipine for her husband who needs to take a tablet thrice daily.

Nifedipine is an antihypertensive drug that retails for about P44 a tablet. At certain times, Silverio also needs Isordil, an antihypertensive drug, which sells for about P14.

"Our maintenance medicines are really expensive. That's why when I saw that drugstore and learned that they were selling cheaper medicines, I decided to give it a try," said Silverio. "I've been buying from them for a year now and the effects are the same."

The generic counterpart of Euglocon, which Silverio buys from the Botika ng Bayan, costs only P5 to P6, while Nifedipine costs P25 to P26.

These prices are 40- to 50-percent lower than what Silverio used to pay.

Silverio is one of the growing number of Filipinos who are starting to realize that quality medicines need not be too expensive.

Roberto Pagdanganan, PITC chair and president, said public awareness of the Botika ng Bayan was one of the most important accomplishments of the program.

"Before, people would buy whatever was prescribed to them. Now, more people are looking for generic counterparts of medicines with the belief that these are just as safe and efficacious as branded ones," said Pagdanganan. "They also know now that they have a right to lower-priced medicines."

Sales of generic drugs, he said, rose to 4 percent as of 2006, from 2-3 percent in 2004 and 2005.

"Even just a one-percentage point increase in the share of generics in the P100-billion drug market is already a big thing in absolute value," said Cecilia Sison, PITC vice president for business development.

Pagdanganan said he believed that by the end of the year, the share of generics—both branded and "true"—would increase to as much as 20 to 25 percent.

"Our dream is to achieve a 50-percent market share for generics by 2010," Sison said.

True generics are not associated with any manufacturer and are known and classified by their content (i.e., ascorbic acid, metformin). Branded generics are lower-priced medicines manufactured by and identified with pharmaceutical companies.

"We want to make a dent, a huge impact and in order to do that, we have to break the 'cartelized' system," said Pagdanganan.

3-pronged strategy

"To achieve this and our targets, the agency is adopting a three-pronged strategy—expanded product range, expanded distribution network and aggressive, intensified information and advocacy campaigns," he said.

To expand its product range, the PITC is doing parallel importation and is encouraging local manufacturers to produce their own lines of medicines, especially off-patent ones.

For this year, it is looking at importing up to P1 billion worth of low-cost medicines.

"Parallel importation becomes necessary only if local prices are too high," Pagdanganan said. "This is just one component of our overall strategy. But once we've strengthened the local pharmaceutical industry, we don't have to do that anymore."

Seventy percent of the drug industry in the country is controlled by foreign pharmaceutical firms, according to Sison.

The Philippines is one of the few countries whose market for medicines is dominated by foreign companies.

Prices of commonly bought medicines are said to be five to six times higher than those of similar drugs sold in other countries.

Pagdanganan encourages Philippine companies to produce generic counterparts for a "fairer, healthy market competition that will effectively bring down prices."

To give parallel importation and manufacturing of off-patent drugs a "legal and firmer basis," the agency is supporting the passage of Senate Bill No. 2263 filed by Sen. Manuel Roxas II.

The bill seeks to relax the Intellectual Property Code to strengthen the legality of parallel importation, allow an "early working doctrine," adopt the doctrine of international exhaustion regime, and enforce the non-patentability of new uses.

Distribution network

There were about 1,300 Botika ng Bayan outlets as of February 2007 and more than 7,000 Botika ng Barangay stores.

A Botika ng Bayan outlet is a privately owned and operated drugstore, which carries over-the-counter (OTC) and prescription drugs, as well as imported branded medicines.

Outlets have a signage that bears the Botika ng Bayan logo and its catchphrase "Gamot na Mabisa na, Mas Abot-kaya pa!"

A Botika ng Barangay, meanwhile, is owned either by a local government unit, people's organization or community-based organization. It sells only OTC and selected prescription drugs.

In the second quarter of the year, the PITC will launch BNB Express, a privately owned convenience store, which will also sell only OTC and selected prescription drugs.

"Our goal for 2007 is to have 2,000 Botika ng Bayan outlets, 11,000 Botika ng Barangay and 10,000 BNB Express stores," Sison said.

"We have been mandated by President (Macapagal-Arroyo) to have at least one Botika ng Bayan for every two barangays. I think by 2010, we can even push it further to three Botikas in four barangays," Pagdanganan said.

Employment opportunities abound

Providing cheaper medicines and greater access to these, is just one side of the Botika ng Bayan story.

"More than just making medicines more affordable, the Botika ng Bayan program is also about creating more jobs, more opportunities for Filipinos," said Pagdanganan.

Take the case of Virginia Pajayjay Lejano, an owner of a Botika ng Bayan outlet at Batasan Hills in Quezon City.

Hers is fairytale-like story which begins with her being the second eldest in a poor family of 20 siblings and its sole breadwinner.

Add to that, Lejano was afflicted with a Stage 4 blood cancer in the early '80s. Her "miraculous" recovery, according to her doctor, only means that Lejano's second lease on life was meant for her to "fulfill a mission."

Believing that "God was good" to her, Lejano decided to pay it forward by opening a Botika ng Bayan outlet in her neighborhood.

"I feel that this is my mission—to help my neighbors by giving them access to cheaper medicines," Lejano said in Filipino.

Lejano worked as a janitress at the PITC for more than a decade. She then became an agent for Order Regalo, one of the PITC's Internal Exports Programs for overseas contract workers. On the side, she engaged in buy-and-sell (garments and groceries) to augment her income and, at the same time, put herself through college.

She also took on a franchise under the PITC's Order Negosyo program.

Despite her lack of knowledge about medicines, Lejano ventured into this new field with a strong resolve, upon learning that the Botika ng Bayan will primarily serve the poor.

Some customers were hesitant at first, questioning the quality of the low-priced medicines that Lejano was selling at her drugstore.

"You can't avoid people doubting and questioning the efficacy of the medicines. The key is to explain and make them understand that these medicines are just as effective and safe," she said.

With Lejano taking time to explain the Botika ng Bayan concept to her customers, more of them are learning to ask doctors for generic counterparts.

More importantly, she has created a form of livelihood out of the Botika ng Bayan. Aside from providing jobs, she has also helped set up four other Botika outlets for some of her customers.

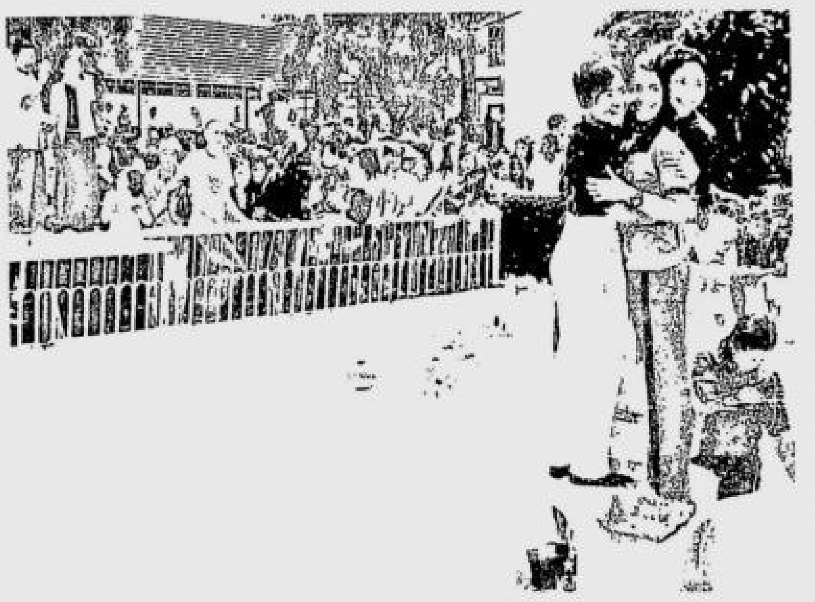
Generics advocacy

Understanding the importance of a strong information campaign as demonstrated by Lejano, the PITC has further intensified its advocacy for generics and the Botika ng Bayan through television and radio ads.

"We couldn't advertise much before because we don't have a lot of outlets yet," said Pagdanganan. "But now that the project is in full swing and many people are starting to understand generics, nothing can stop us now."

With the collaborative efforts of PITC and various agencies, coalitions and organizations, doctors, pharmacists and even consumers, Pagdanganan said he was confident that PITC would exceed its targets for 2010.

"If in 2000, only less than 30 percent of our population had access to medicines, by 2010, it will be the other way around—only less than 30 percent will not have access to medicines," said Pagdanganan. "This market won't ever be the same again."



GRADUATES of the Philippine Military Academy "Maragtas" Class of 2007 are hurled into a pool by underclassmen as part of a ritual before today's commencement exercises at the country's premier military training institution.

EV ESPIRITU/INQUIRER NORTHERN LUZON

Top PMA grad offers Navy …

From page A1

But when Mojica's mother, Ligaya, tried on her daughter's cap to pose for photographers, a different emotion washed over the two women.

Put on a happy face

"I was feeling sad because I remembered her father. This is for him," the mother said.

In her speech, Mojica said the death of her father was one of the tragedies she went through as she struggled to finish school.

She said she discovered he was ill while she was preparing for her part in a skit that was to be presented in a Christmas show by the cadets in 2003.

"I knew my father wanted me to be at my best," Mojica said. "I was playing, singing, but my father had already passed away … I was not able to talk to him. I was out of focus [after that show]."

Another setback

Her sadness over her father's death was not Mojica's only revelation. She recounted that originally, she was actually a member of Class 2006.

"I was not an original member of Class of 2007. I had difficulty with my academic [courses] and the [physical] training. I got turned off because I failed my algebra," she said.

When she was "turned back" to repeat a year of school, she recalled being recruited to do clerical work for the Philippine Army in Fort Bonifacio.

It almost made her abandon her schooling at PMA, she said.

Not again

But she said she rediscovered the value of the PMA when she started reviewing her life.

"My goal is to have a college education … [and to return to PMA meant] I had to study hard, I had to follow regulations … because I was so afraid of being turned back again," Mojica said.

Calunsag said Mojica represented a new breed of Filipinos who excelled despite the odds.

He said people had focused too long on the new generation's deficiencies instead of looking at their proficiencies.

According to Calunsag, the Navy is undertaking a recruitment drive for fresh talents to upgrade its personnel.

"You'd be surprised that we have good material coming from the high schools and marine schools in the provinces," he said.

Maj. Gen. Leopoldo Maligalig, PMA superintendent, said Mojica was not the first top cadet who had to repeat a year, so a "turnback" in her record should not tarnish her achievements.

The Maragtas Class will receive its final recognition at today's graduation ceremony to be attended by President Macapagal-Arroyo.

Defense Secretary Hermogenes Ebdane Jr. also addressed the cadets in a ceremony on Sunday where Mojica and the members of Maragtas Class relinquished their senior status to the PMA Class of 2008.

Everything unforgettable

Ebdane said the graduating cadets were the reasons the Philippines remained a safe and peaceful nation.

Asked about her most unforgettable experience in the academy, Mojica said: "Everything about the academy was unforgettable … From the time we slept, from the time we woke up, from the time we ate lunch."

She said landing the Navy post was another unforgettable event because, in reality, she said, images of seasickness almost overwhelm her.

"That is my secret [fear]," she told the cadets.

All woman

But prayers helped, she said, which was why wearing the ensign cap was a satisfying conclusion to her trials.

Mojica is definitely all woman.

In fact, she was even a "beauty queen" during her elementary days.

As a Grade 4 pupil at the Buna Lejos Elementary School in Indang, Cavite, Mojica was crowned Miss United Nations, besting six other contestants in what her former teacher Lerma Peña described as "a contest of wit, talent and beauty."

"Despite her boyish manners, Andrelee was really beautiful on the day she was crowned Miss UN. If I remember it right, she even wore makeup then," Peña recalled, laughing.

Peña, now the principal of their school, also remembered Mojica as a bright girl who excelled in the arts, sports and academics.

"I'm extremely proud of her. She's the 'golden harvest' of our school." *With a report from Marlon Ramos, Inquirer Southern Luzon*

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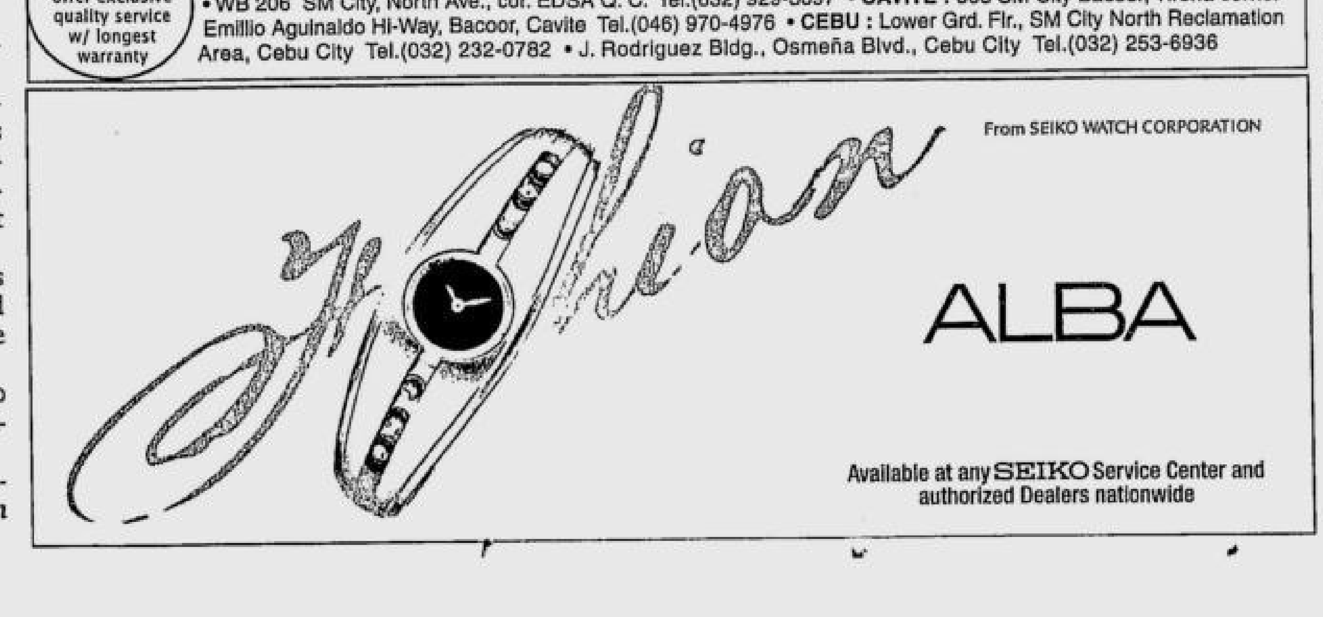

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3 Filipino women off to Everest

From page A1

QUIRER minutes before boarding their Bangkok-bound flight.

"We are not different from other Filipinas. We are normal Filipinas. We don't have special skills, special talents, or special anything. We just want to show that we are normal people who [like others] ride the jeep, but we can dare to do something that seems impossible and we will make it possible," said Wenceslao.

The team plans to train for a month and a half in high-altitude conditions before making the assault on Everest's snow-shrouded summit sometime in May.

It was also in May last year that three Filipino mountaineers made history by conquering the forbidding mountain. They did it one after the other.

The three were Leo Oracion, who began his assault on May 13 and reached the summit on May 17, Erwin Emata (May 15-18) and Romeo Garduce (May 14-19).

Another mountaineer, Dale Abenojar, claimed to have successfully climbed Everest a few days before Oracion did. But some members of the Filipino mountaineering community doubted his claim.

Sendoff from FVR

Oracion and Emata left with the all-woman summit team on the Bangkok flight. They will act as expedition leaders and will stay at the Everest base camp to direct the climb of the three Filipinas.

Expedition physician Dr. Ted Esguerra also joined the group and would be on medical duty throughout the summit attempt.

Former President Fidel Ramos, an avid supporter of the Everest team, saw the group off at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport.

Ramos, who turned 79 yesterday, also gave a birthday treat to the team by handing them a cash donation.

From Thailand, the team will change planes for the Nepalese capital of Kathmandu. They will then travel to the Solu Khumbu area in Nepal for two weeks of acclimatization, and then move to the Everest base camp for another month to adapt to the mountain's weather, Belarmino said.

Proving their mettle

The three women, all from the Philippine Coast Guard, had taken mountaineering lessons in India and New Zealand and have shown their mettle in mountain climbing, scaling the sixth tallest mountain in the world, Mount Cho-Oyu.

Located 28 km west of Everest, Cho-Oyu—at 26,906 feet—is about 2,100 feet lower than Everest.

"Compared to us last year, I am more confident that they can do it because they have an edge over us in terms of 'training," Emata said.

He also said that the three women had trained at higher altitudes than he and Oracion did before the two of them conquered Everest last year.

"So they have exposure, which is supposed to be the proper training prior to Everest ... That's why we are more confident about them."

Besides guiding the expedition, Emata and Oracion will serve as their female counterparts' inspiration to succeed.

"They did it and they did it even if everything was not well," said Belarmino. "They got through difficulties ... They gave us advice and we became inspired by their dedication to climb. We have the same goals and if they did it, we can do it, too."

Since 1922, a total of 186 climbers have perished in their assault of Everest.

The first time anyone conquered Everest was on May 29, 1953, when New Zealander Sir Edmund Hillary and his sherpa (guide) Tenzing Norgay reached the summit. *With a report from Inquirer Research*

Cut in $360-M US assistance to RP looms

From page A1

by the Philippine military.

The testimonies indicated that the US government was using the aid as leverage to crack down on the involvement of military personnel in the killings.

Eric John, US deputy assistant secretary of state for East Asia, himself admitted that Ms Arroyo had not done enough to deal with security forces under her command, which were held responsible for the killings in reports by the Melo Commission and Philip Alston, a UN special rapporteur on human rights.

'She has to take steps'

Asked by Boxer if Ms Arroyo's actions had been sufficient to hold the security forces responsible for the killing of 830 political activists claimed by human rights groups, John said: "Until these numbers come dramatically down, though, I don't think you can determine that it is enough. As the ultimate authority in the chain of command, she has to take steps to solve any involvement by members of the security forces."

At the start of the hearings, Boxer cautioned John against "doublespeak" in painting a "rosy picture" of the Philippine economy. She called attention to the recent survey by the Hong Kong-based Political and Economic Risk Consultancy, which found that the Philippines is now perceived by foreign businessmen doing business in the country as the most corrupt in Asia.

Boxer asked John whether the United States should link its infusion of military aid to improvement in the Philippines human rights record. "It is really important that we do not have blood on our hand in the country," she said.

The senator said that, despite the rhetoric coming from Manila officials, the Philippine government had not embarked on anything credible to mitigate the killings and that US assistance must be used not only to send a "strong signal but to leverage the stop to the extrajudicial killings in the Philippines."

Counterproductive

Boxer said that verifiable results from the Philippine government "are even more urgent because the US military presence in the Philippines assisting its military antiterror campaigns could be misunderstood as a party to the illegal killings."

"Our approach is that tying legislation to assistance can be counterproductive," John replied.

Another witness, Eugene Martin, former deputy head of the US Embassy in Manila, questioned Ms Arroyo's capacity to take steps to end the killings.

Martin said that Ms Arroyo had become "politically weak" since her controversial election in 2004, and she depended on military support for survival (against challenges to her administration from street insurrections and coup attempts by mutinous military groups).

"While we hope the killings will stop immediately, I am not optimistic in the short run," said Martin, who is now with the US Institute of Peace, an independent think tank in Washington.

Anticorruption measures

However, Martin pointed out that aid donor countries and international financial institutions (including the World Bank), which already had strong anticorruption requirements for economic assistance, should link aid to independent investigations of the killings to enhance the resolution of the cases.

The European Union has strongly called on the Philippine government to end the killings and prosecute the assailants. The European Union has made it a mandatory policy that developing countries adhere to the principle of protecting human rights of their citizens as a condition to receiving economic and technical aid.

Following her US state visit in May 2003, Ms Arroyo announced that the Bush administration had committed $356 million in defense and counterterrorism aid to the Philippines.

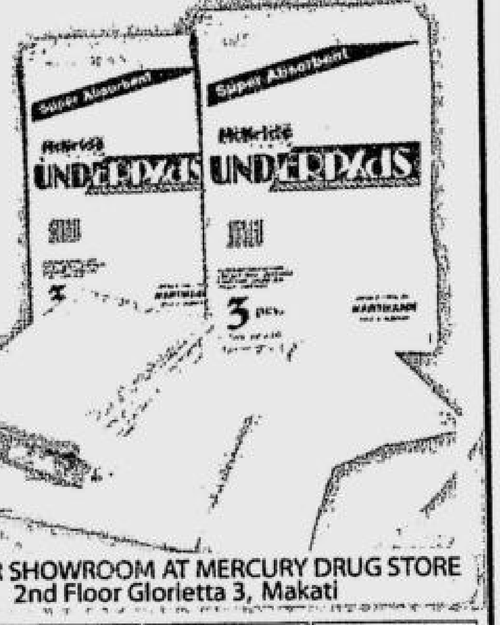
State department records introduced at the Senate hearing showed that aid to help the Philippine counterinsurgency campaign included $70 million in Foreign Military Financing from 2004-06 and $2.7 million in International Military Education and Training in 2004. The Philippines also received $148 million worth of equipment under the Excess Defense Articles Program.

'Climate of impunity'

Amnesty International officials pointed out at the hearing that the Leahy Law on the Philippines prohibited the US government from providing military aid to armies that abused human rights.

The testimony of John and Martin added weight to the perception that the US government and the Democratic majority in the Senate were pushing the Arroyo administration to exercise stronger control of the military authority and potential confrontation with its extreme Right-wing faction.

Earlier, the state department released a damning US country report on human rights practices covering 82 countries, including the Philippines. The report said that the unsolved and unpunished killings of political activists and journalists in the Philippines "contributed to the climate of impunity" in the country.



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6 ARMM provinces on poll watch list

ZAMBOANGA CITY—THE SIX PROVINCES OF THE AUtonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao have been placed under the Philippine National Police and Commission on Elections watch list after they were labeled "hotly contested areas."

Chief Supt. Joel Rudio Goltiao, police chief for the ARMM, told the INQUIRER on Friday that aside from Maguindanao, Lanao del Sur, Basilan, Sulu, Tawi-Tawi and Sharif Kabunsuan, 29 villages were labeled "immediate areas of concern," while 737 others as "areas of concern."

"We are doing the assessment every day. Updating may vary but our basis for identifying these areas as hotly contested is due to the recent intense political rivalry, the presence of armed groups and history of violent incidents on previous elections," Goltiao said.

He also said Comelec Chair Benjamin Abalos had approved a request of some regional election directors to deputize military troops in the coming elections in areas "where there are extreme situations."

Sulu, Lanao del Sur, Basilan and Sharif Kabunsuan are areas where soldiers will be tapped to assist the police, Goltiao said. They have already started coordinating with the Philippine Marines assigned in Sulu, he said.

Police and military said no special treatment will be given to followers and supporters of Moro National Liberation Front leader Nur Misuari, who is considering to run for the gubernatorial seat in Sulu.

Lt. Gen. Eugenio Cedo, Western Mindanao Command chief, said MNLF members who go around fully armed and campaigning for Misuari would be arrested.

"We will definitely apprehend them," Cedo said.

In Manila, Philipine National Police chief Director General Oscar Calderon said the PNP was not taking any chances of violence marring the May polls. He warned police commanders to do their jobs properly or face relief. He also ordered all leaves of absence of PNP personnel cancelled starting April 1.

Already, 29 election-related violent incidents have been recorded in different parts of the country by the National Election Monitoring and Action Center in Camp Crame in Quezon City. Police have arrested 1,178 persons and confiscated 1,106 firearms, 57 explosive devices and 198 deadly weapons. *Julie Alipala, Inquirer Mindanao, and Christine Avendaño in Manila*

Comelec probes teachers' leaves in time for May polls

By Jolene R. Bulambot
Inquirer Visayas

CEBU CITY—THE COMMISSION on Elections in Central Visayas is looking into reports that 40 percent of teachers in the northern towns of Cebu had filed for leaves of absence stating that they were ill and could not serve in the May elections.

Comelec regional director Rene Buac told reporters that he would investigate both the teachers and the doctors who signed their medical certificates amid reports that the teachers could just be feigning illness to avoid election duties.

If the Comelec could find evidence of collusion between the teachers and doctors, it would not hesitate to file an election offense against them, Buac said.

"I was just recently informed that 40 percent from this particular district in the northern part (of Cebu) submitted medical certificates," he said.

"This is alarming and a cause of concern because under the law, the public school teachers are mandated to serve during the election. We will be doing a preliminary investigation into this report," the director said.

Buac said Education Undersecretary Franklin Sunga, head of the DepEd's legal department, relayed the report to him during a conference here on March 12.

The director, however, refused to give the specific areas and number of teachers who allegedly filed a leave of absence and submitted medical certificates pending inquiry into the matter.

There are three congressional districts in northern Cebu.

Buac warned that feigning illness was an election offense and carries a prison term of one to six years.

Cebu province has over 10,000 public school teachers in the elementary and high school levels, but Buac said there was still a shortage of public school teachers who would serve as members of the Board of Election Inspectors (BEIs) in the elections.

Schools Division Superintendent Recaredo Borgonia, acting on the report, on Thursday issued a memorandum to all teachers who intend to apply for leaves of absence during the May elections that they would be examined first by the division's medical doctors or must present laboratory examination results before their applications are approved.

Borgonia said he had also formed a team to look into the applications for leave filed by 40 percent of the teachers in a congressional district in northern Cebu.

FILSCAP WINS COPYRIGHT INFRINGEMENT CASE VS. RAJAH BROADCASTING NETWORK

The Filipino Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers, Inc (FILSCAP) recently won its case for "infringement of copyright and damages" against Rajah Broadcasting Network, Inc.

Presiding Judge Reynaldo B. Daway of the Regional Trial Court of Quezon City (Branch 90) ruled that "the defendant infringed the copyrights assigned to/administered by the plaintiff when the former staged the concert where musical works belonging to/administered by the latter were publicly performed without the required public performance license."

In his decision dated January 30, 2007, Judge Daway determined that Filscap thru its legal counsel, Atty. Michael Henry Yusingco, presented sufficient evidence to substantiate its claims and ordered the defendant to pay license fees, attorney's fees and costs of suit, and exemplary damages amounting to a total of P143,959.52.

It was learned that before filing the infringement case Filscap found out about the concert "DZRJ's 40th, The Grand Reunion" that Rajah Broadcasting Network was to stage at the Araneta Coliseum on October 25, 2003. Filscap demanded that Rajah Broadcasting first secure a public performance license prior to the concert date, but they failed to do so.

Filscap employees noted down the songs as which are included in Filscap's repertoire of musical works that were performed during the concert and thereafter sent reminders and demand letters to Rajah Broadcasting for it to comply with its obligations. Filscap finally filed the infringement case on June 17, 2004 to protect the interests of songwriters it represents as well as its contractual obligations with foreign collection management organizations.

FILSCAP is a non-stock, non-profit organization that administers the public performance, mechanical reproduction, and synchronization rights of its members. It represents the same rights for foreign composers under foreign collection management organizations such as ASCAP and BMI in the U.S., and PRS (United Kingdom) through reciprocal agreements.

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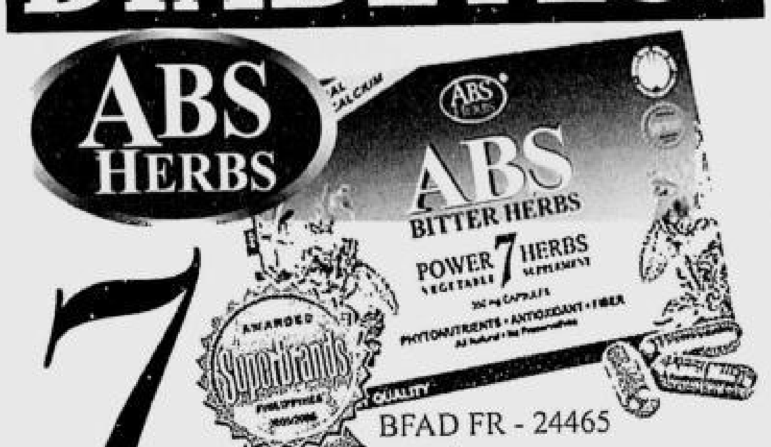

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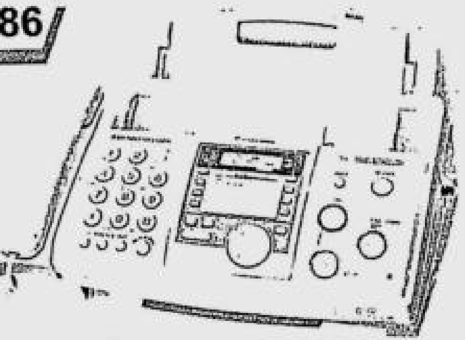

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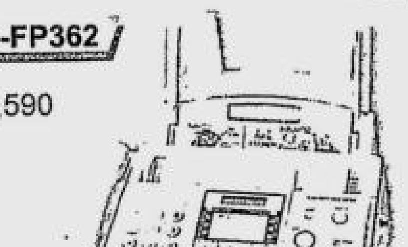

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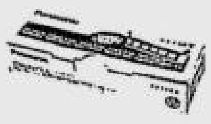

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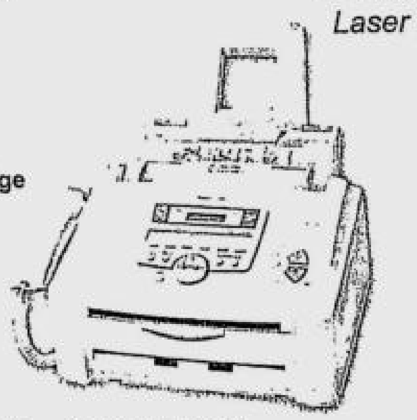

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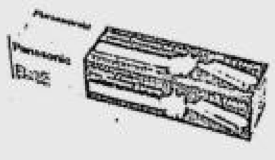

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HUMAN Rights Commissioner Wilhelm Soriano talks to Michael Mesayes, one of the so-called "Tagaytay 5" during his recent visit at their jail in Camp Vicente Lim. MARLON RAMOS/INQUIRER SOUTHERN LUZON

2 detainees join fasting of 'Tagaytay 5'

CALAMBA CITY—A POLITICAL DETAINEE IN Oriental Mindoro and another held in Bicutan, Taguig, joined the fasting of five detainees collectively known as the "Tagaytay 5" to condemn the inhumane prison system and slow justice in the country.

Eduardo Serrano, Sandino Esguerra, and the Tagaytay 5 have been skipping meals, subsisting only on biscuits and liquids for almost a month now.

Detained at the Oriental Mindoro provincial jail in Calapan City, Serrano, alleged spokesperson of the communist-led National Democratic Front in Mindoro, said that for two years now, justice had eluded him.

The Department of Justice has not acted on his petition for review of the criminal charges pressed against him, he said in a statement.

Serrano has appealed for the conversion of the charges to rebellion which, he said, legally applied to political prisoners.

Just like what happened to Tagaytay 5 and other political prisoners, Serrano was abducted and held incommunicado before he was presented to media, he said.

Also charged with murder, Esguerra, a detainee for six years now at Camp Bagong Diwa in Bicutan is seeking better prison treatment and his immediate release.

Serrano and Esguerra have been taking biscuits and liquids since Feb. 21 and Feb 27, respectively.

The Tagaytay 5 have been skipping regular meals since Feb. 20. Three of them—Riel Custodio, Axel Pinpin and Aris Sarmiento—started to subsist mainly on biscuits and liquids on March 6.

Enrico Ybañez could only skip lunch due to his health condition, while Michael Masayes returned to his regular meals upon the advice of the doctor because of a history of ulcer.

The prisoners said they would escalate their fasting to a hunger strike if their cases and prison conditions did not develop.

"This prison protest aims to expose what kind of judicial system we have and what tactics the government uses to repress its people," Serrano said.

The government and its agents' ways of persecution are either through extrajudicial killing or sending its opponents and critics behind bars, he added.

Political prisoners in other detention facilities have also joined the fasting, according to human rights group Karapatan-Southern Tagalog.

The region has 41 political prisoners, most of whom were detained during the administration of President Macapagal-Arroyo, added the group. *Niña Catherine Calleja, Inquirer Southern Luzon*

Laguna inmate dies in prison

CAMP VICENTE LIM, LAGUNA—A SICKLY INmate died shortly after he collapsed inside the crowded jail in Los Baños town on Thursday.

Muncipal police chief Senior Insp. Aldrin Abila ruled out foul play in the death of Michael Mance, 23, of Barangay Halang, Calamba City.

"He was already suffering from tuberculosis even before he was arrested and imprisoned in our detention facility," Abila told the INQUIRER over the phone.

Los Baños police investigator PO1 Aldrin Ladrona said the detainee was coughing incessantly when he suddenly collapsed and went unconscious at around 7:30 a.m.

He said the inmate was rushed to the Pagamutang Panlalawigan ng Laguna but declared dead on arrival by doctors.

Ladrona said Mance was arrested and detained on Sept. 7, 2006 for theft.

Mance started to show signs of failing health a few days after he was incarcerated, Ladrona said.

"He was actually undergoing medication for tuberculosis after his arrest. We had also brought him to a public hospital but he was eventually discharged," Ladrona said in separate phone interview.

He said 54 inmates were cramped in three small prison cells. Mance was among the 24 prisoners locked up in one of the cells, he said.

Abila said the jail was not suited to hold more than 10 inmates. "*Yung sampung preso nga masikip na* (It's already crowded for 10 inmates) what more if we have more than 10? The prisoners there could not even lie on the floor if they want to sleep," he said.

The heat inside the jail might have worsened the condition of Mance, he said.

Marlon Ramos, Inquirer Southern Luzon

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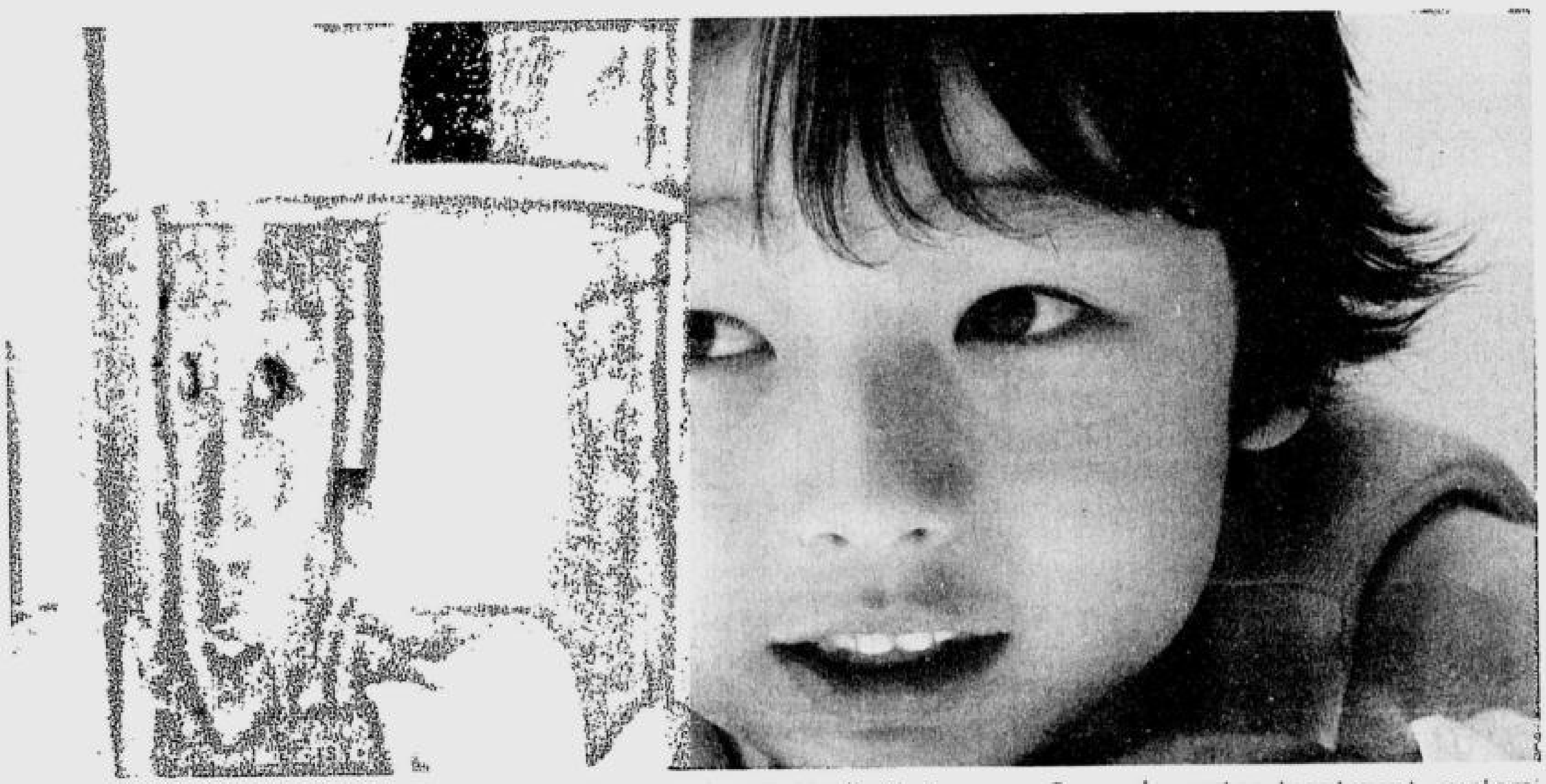

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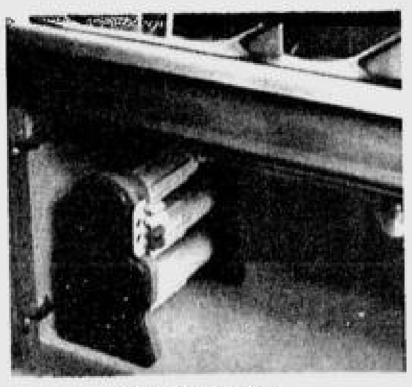

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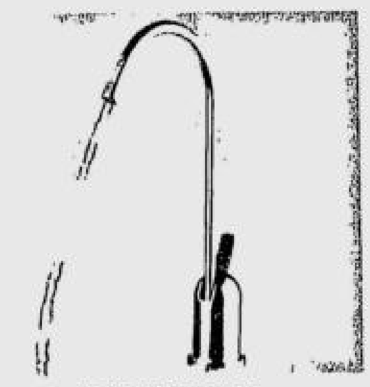

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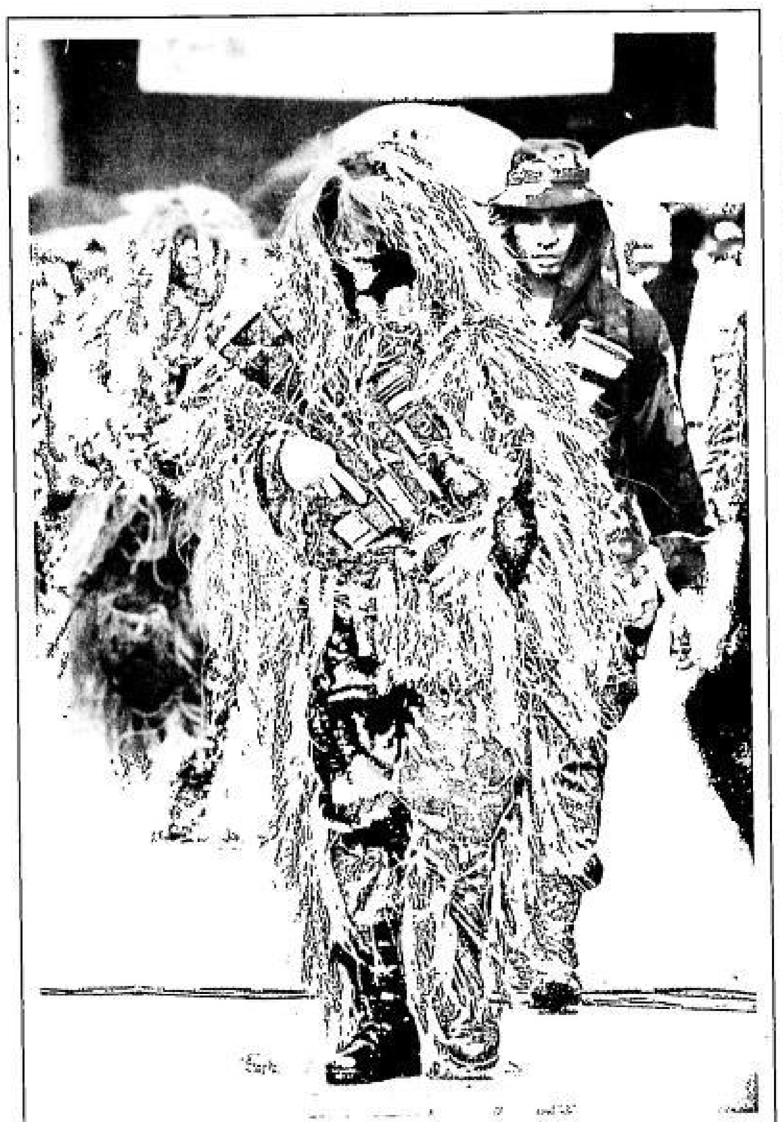


DAVAO DAY
Snipers from the police Special Action Force participate in the civic and military parade during the Araw ng Dabaw's 70th foundation anniversary on Friday. BING GONZALES/INQUIRER MINDANAO

CA stops dismissal order vs Iloilo gov

By Nestor P. Burgos Jr.
Inquirer Visayas

ILOILO CITY—THE COURT OF Appeals has barred the Ombudsman from implementing a dismissal order against Iloilo Gov. Niel Tupas Sr. and two provincial board members.

In a strongly worded 38-page order promulgated by the CA's 18th Division in Cebu City on March 15 and released on Friday, the appellate court issued a permanent injunction barring the implementation of the orders of the Ombudsman and the Department of the Interior and Local Government against Tupas and Board Members Domingo Oso Jr. and Cecilia Capadosa.

The court said that after it studied and viewed the case in proper perspective, it reached the conclusion that Ombudsman Merceditas Gutierrez "acted with grave abuse of discretion amounting to lack or in excess of jurisdiction" when she ordered the immediate execution of her Dec. 4, 2006 decisions dismissing the three officials accused of graft.

Therefore, it said, the corresponding implementing order embodied in the Memorandum dated Jan. 15, 2007 issued by Interior Secretary Ronaldo Puno was "null and void."

The Ombudsman ordered Tupas and the board members dismissed after finding them guilty of graft for allocating a total of P85,000 to the provincial board members' league.

The Court of Appeals order signed by Associate Justice Francisco Acosta and concurred by Associate Justices Arsenio Magpale and Agustin Dizon granted the petition for certiorari and the issuance of an injunction against the Ombudsman and the DILG filed by Tupas.

"The respondents are therefore permanently enjoined from implementing the orders of dismissal issued by respondent Ombudsman within the period prescribed by the Rule for filing a petition for review under Rule 43 of the Rules of Court or until the same shall have been resolved with finality," said the order.

The respondents include Gutierrez, Puno, Iloilo Vice Gov. Roberto Armada and provincial Board Member Emmanuel Gallar.

Tupas welcomed the order and thanked his supporters.

"We are vindicated by this order. It shows that if you are right, you will prevail," he said in a press conference on Friday.

TUPAS

The CA order was issued three days before the lapse of the 60-day temporary restraining order issued by the CA on Jan. 17, stopping the implementation of the dismissal order.

The TRO stopped the armed assault on the provincial capitol by around 200 fully armed policemen who enforced the dismissal order.

The CA castigated the Ombudsman and the DILG for issuing and implementing the dismissal orders in violation of rules and jurisprudence.

While it upheld the authority of the Ombudsman to discipline elective local officials, the CA said the orders against Tupas, Oso and Capadosa "are not immediately executory."

"This court, therefore, holds and so rules that decisions of dismissal rendered by respondent Ombudsman in the instant case are not immediately executory. Consequently, the orders embodied in these decisions directing respondent DILG secretary to implement them "upon receipt" and consequently the implementing order issued by the DILG are a nullity and therefore, have no force and effect," the CA said.

It said Tupas and other respondents were also denied due process when the Ombudsman and the DILG implemented the dismissal order.

Citing jurisprudence, the CA said the officials "have a clear legal right to their elective positions."

"... Petitioners cannot be deprived of their office without due process of law. Due process of law requires due notice and the right to avail of the remedies provided by law," the CA said.

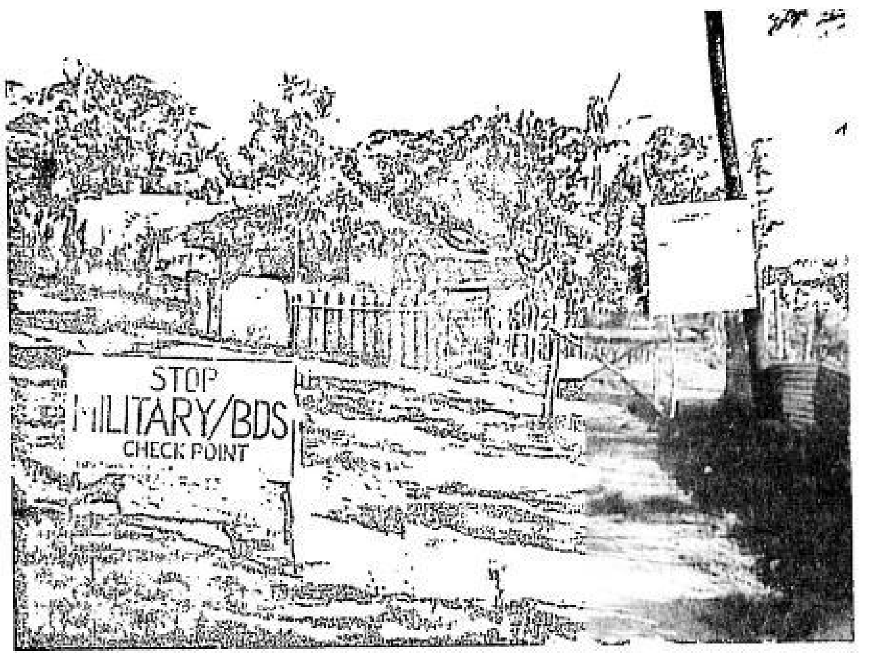
It pointed out that Tupas and the other officials ordered dismissed were not duly served copies of the Ombudsman decisions.

"... They were ordered removed even before they could have availed of the legal remedies like the filing of a motion for reconsideration and the right to the appeal of the said decisions."

The CA also said it had the jurisdiction to decide on the cases contrary to the position of the respondents that the petition filed by Tupas was moot and academic because the decisions of the Ombudsman were served on Jan. 17 before the TRO was issued.

Checkpoints in Sorsogon town don't bother kin of fishers' group head

By Bobby Q. Labalan
Inquirer Southern Luzon



CHECKPOINTS line up the 13-km road from the national highway in Barangay Cumadcad to the residence of Pamalakaya chair Fernando Hicap in Barangay Tomalaytay in Castilla, Sorsogon. BOBBY LABALAN/INQUIRER SOUTHERN LUZON

CASTILLA, SORSOGON—AT least 16 checkpoints dot the 13-kilometer road from the national highway in Barangay Cumadcad to the house of Fernando Hicap, chair of the militant fisherfolk alliance Pambansang Lakas ng Kilusang Mamamalakaya ng Pilipinas, in Barangay Tomalaytay here.

The checkpoints are part of the barangay defense system initiated by Mayor Renato Laurinaria and barangay officials to ensure the safety of the residents.

Laurinaria, in a phone interview, told the INQUIRER that the security setup was devised as part of the campaign to totally deny the communist-led New People's Army of any chance "to terrorize and harass" the people of this town.

The mayor had publicly declared total war against the rebel organization since he assumed office in 1998.

He was the only local official in the province to have done so.

During a visit to the town on Friday, the INQUIRER was stopped five times in checkpoints and was requested to sign a logbook detailing the identity, vehicle, destination, time and purpose of the visits.

Checkpoints

The checkpoints are manned by villagers, some of them women.

One was located about two meters from the gate of the Hicap household near the shore of the village.

But relatives of the Pamalakaya chair said they didn't consider it an act of harassment.

Neither did they feel threatened by its presence.

"In fact, some of our relatives are the ones manning that checkpoint at day time," said Odessa Hicap-Lagutin, a sister of Fernando.

Lagutin said it was a security measure approved by the barangay residents.

Some villagers were playing cards inside the 2-square-meter nipa hut checkpoint when the INQUIRER arrived in the village.

Florencio Hicap, Fernando's father, said the residents did not object to the setting up of the checkpoint because it is part of the village security measure.

Barangay chair Rufino Hicap, Florencio's brother, had high praises for the presence of the Philippine Army in their area, saying it was a big relief for all of them.

"Since they arrived, the New People's Army was forced to stop collecting revolutionary tax, which used to be a huge burden for my constituents," the village chief said.

Hicap said that even village council members were not spared by the rebels from the tax collection.

"Village councilors were taxed P25 every pay day, while farmers were made to pay one sack for every ten sacks of palay that they harvested, but I refused to pay," he stressed. He requested to the *Inquirer* to make sure that his comments were printed.

Big relief

Hicap said the presence of the military was a big relief for all of them, adding that only those who acted as collectors of the NPA opposed it and that they had already left the village.

The village chief said it was the barangay council and not the military which identified the locations of the checkpoints, including the one found very near the house of Fernando, which was along the path going to a sitio (sub-village).

Three such checkpoints are located in the village center and are manned by the residents at daytime and by Army soldiers at night, he said.

Hicap said the people were also vigilant against possible abuse by the military, adding that they would immediately report to the local authorities and the media if that happened.

Harassment

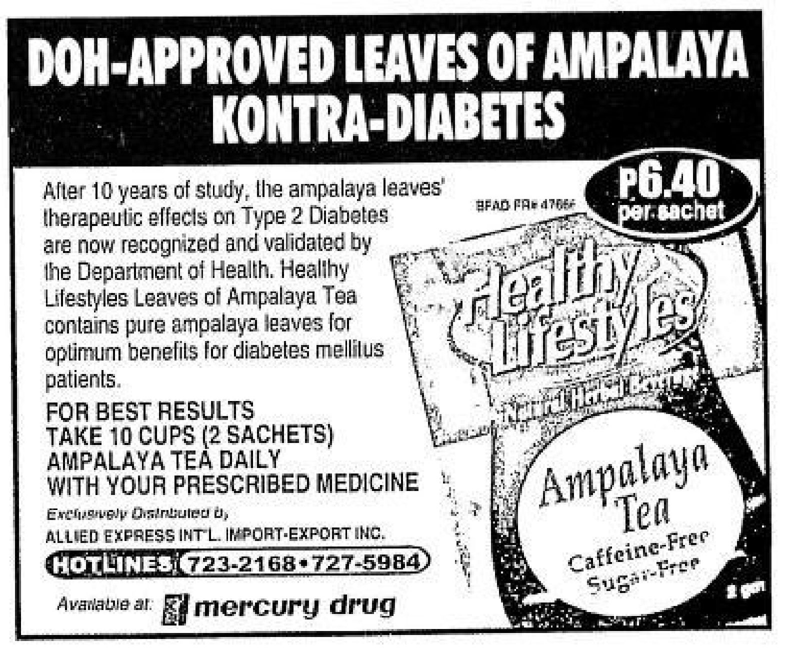
The commanding officer of the Army unit that has jurisdiction over this town denied that his soldiers were harassing the residents.

Lt. Col. Claudio Yucot, head of the Army's 9th Infantry Battalion, said the soldiers were protecting the people and the government's projects from the rebels.

Yucot stressed that it was their responsibility to ensure the people's safety.

Church officials led by Sorsogon Bishop Arturo Bastes have denounced the checkpoints, saying that the people felt harassed.

The Church conducted a prayer-rally in Sorsogon City about two weeks ago, calling on the government to stop the "militarization" in this town, as well as the unsolved killings in the province.



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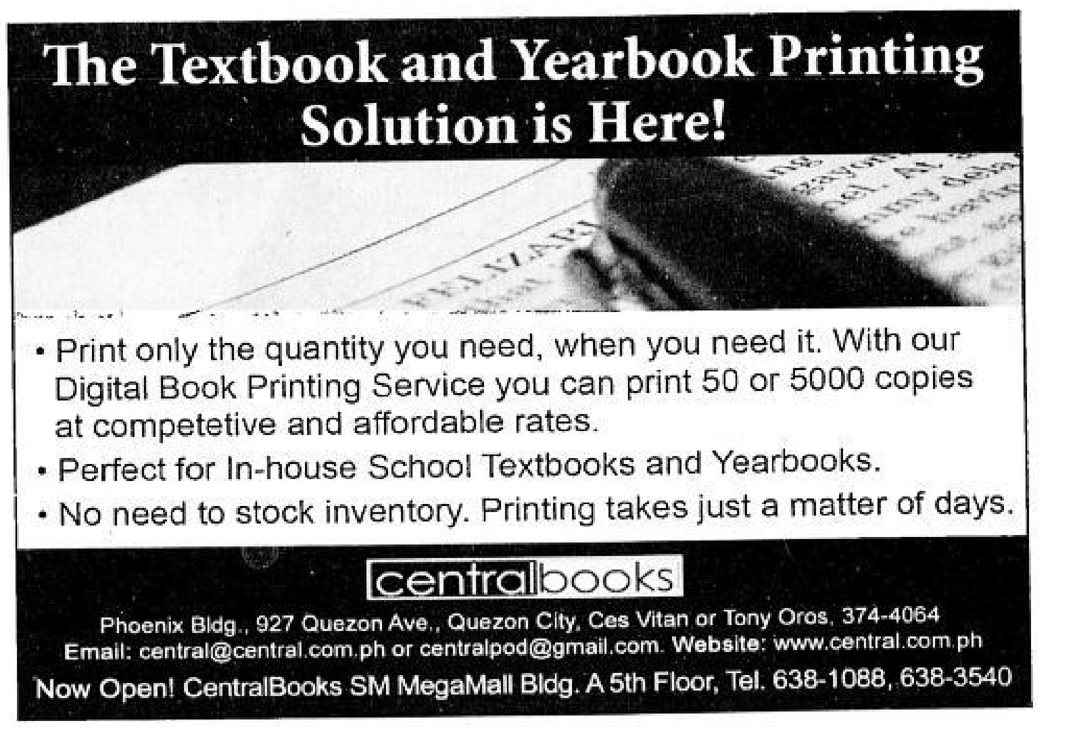

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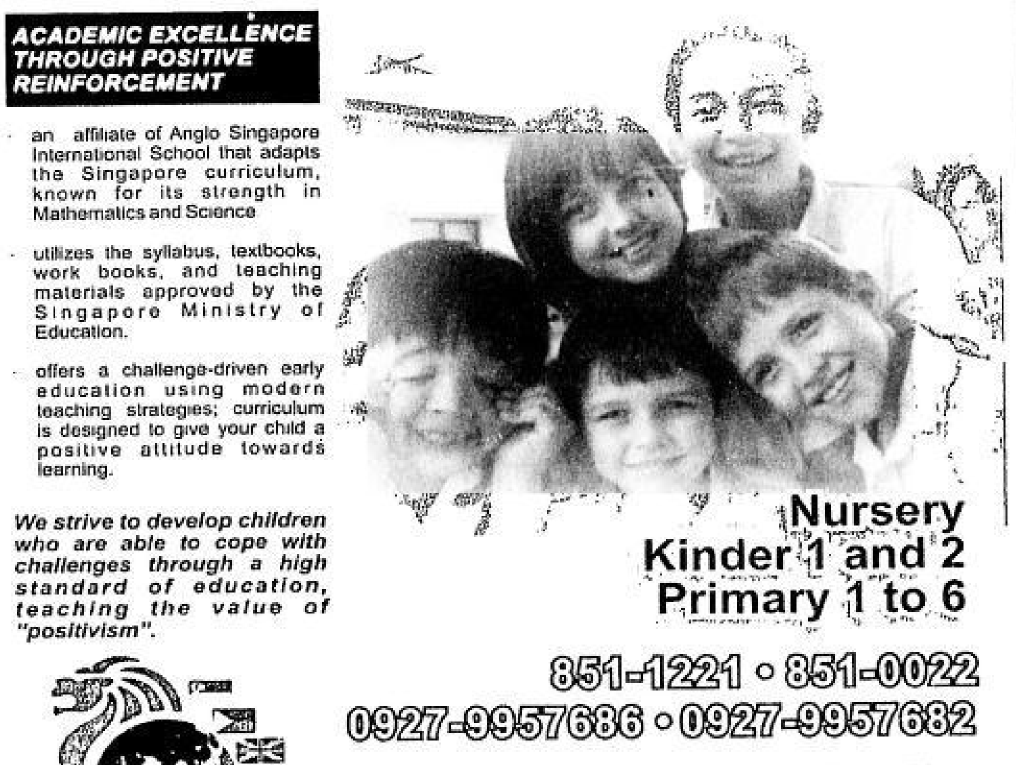

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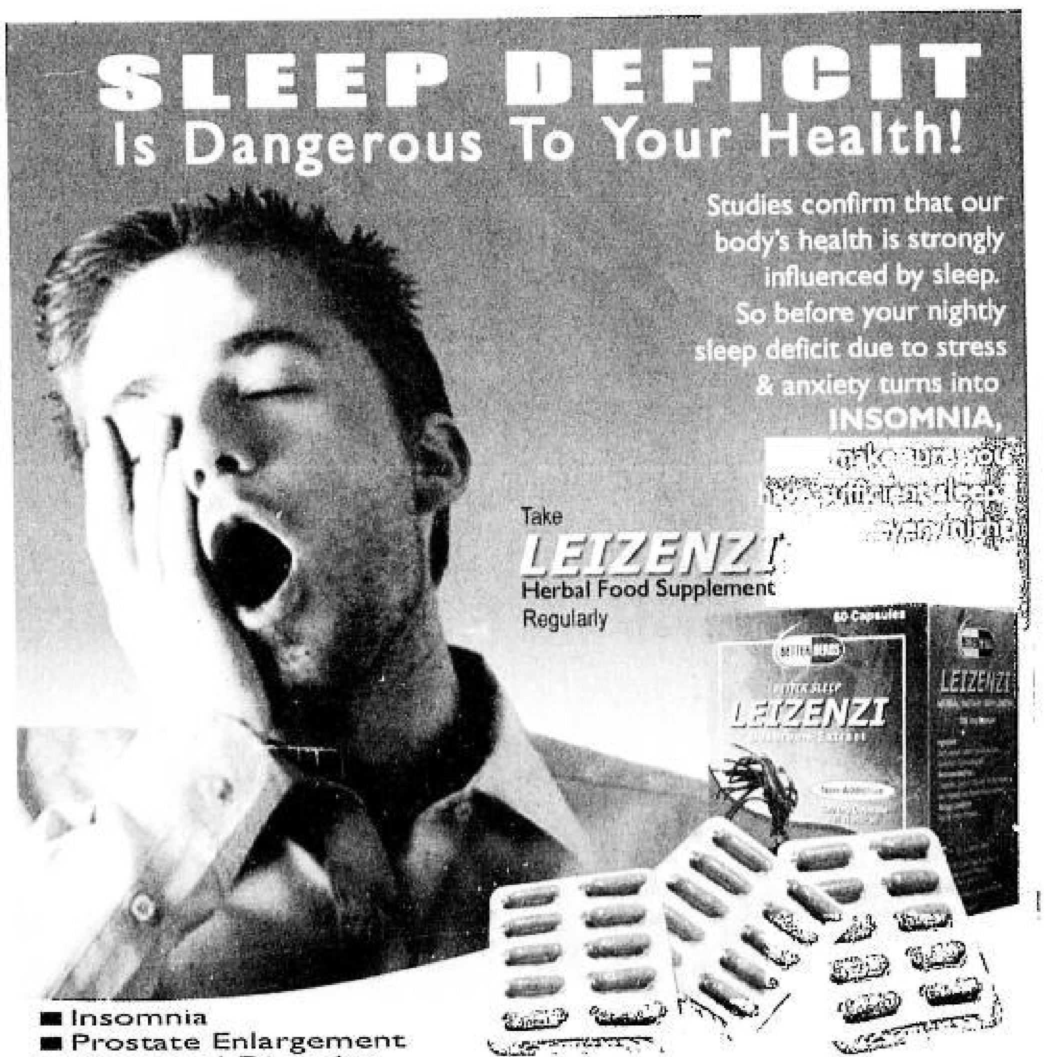

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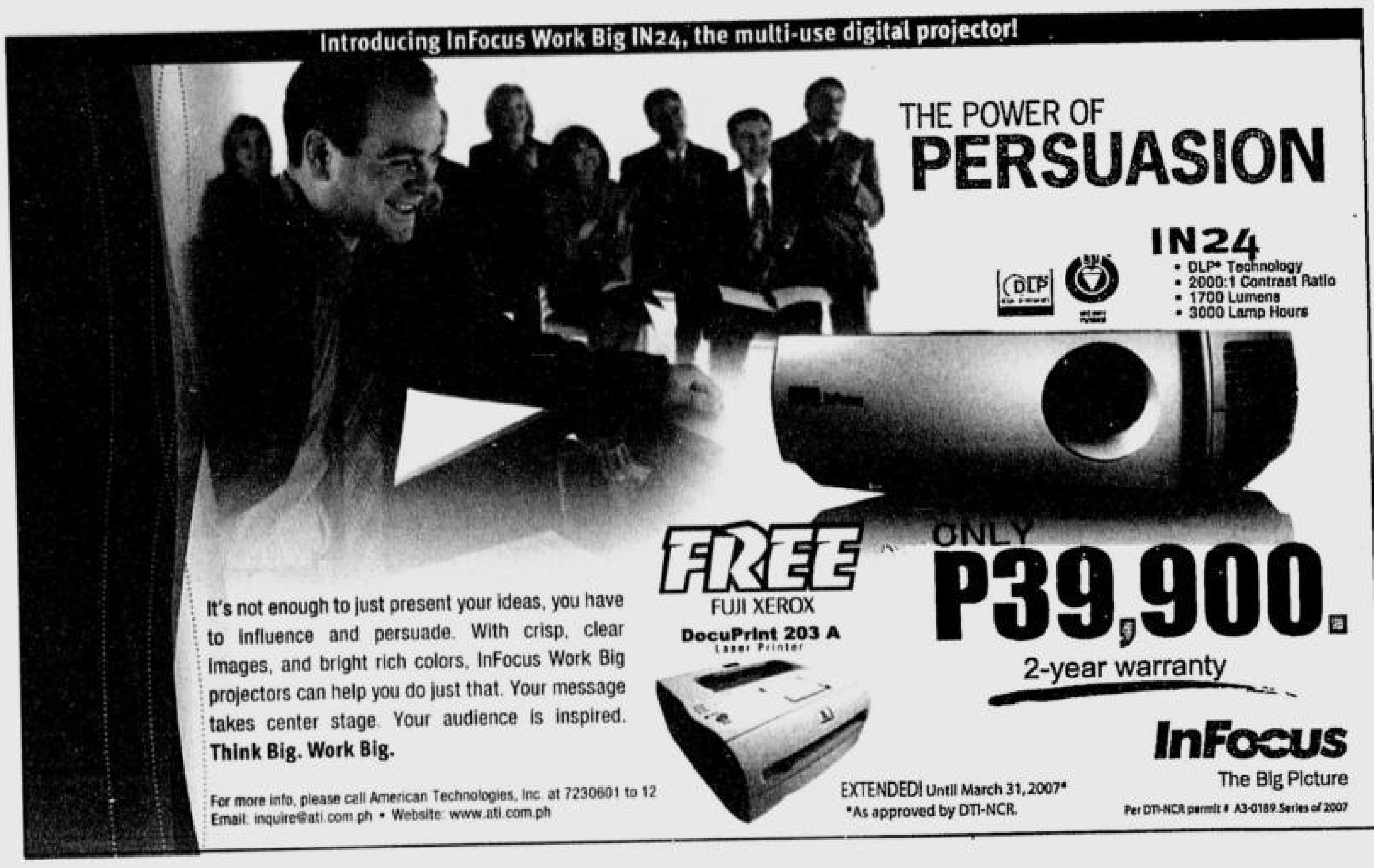

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AIR21 standouts Arwind Santos (left) and Wynne Arboleda try to strip a fallen Talk 'N Text import James Sullinger of possession. AUGUST DELA CRUZ

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Express still hot; Kings foil Bulls

By June Navarro

THE AIR21 EXPRESS KEPT their winning streak intact on the same day Red Bull saw its own come to an end.

Barangay Ginebra stopped Red Bull on its tracks with a methodical 111-105 victory last night in the PBA Fiesta Conference at the Araneta Coliseum.

Rod Nealy pumped in 31 points while Ronald Tubid and Sunday Salvacion chipped in 20 points apiece as the Gin Kings notched their second victory in three games while inflicting a first loss on the Bulls.

Larry Fonacier tossed in 23 points for the Bulls, who got a mediocre performance from James Penny and dropped to 3-1. Saddled by early foul trouble, Penny lost his focus and finished with 18 points and 10 rebounds.

Earlier, Shawn Daniels finished with a triple-double and did a little of every thing else in overtime as the Express turned back the Talk 'N Text Phone Pals, 124-118.

Using his beefy frame to the hilt, Daniels wound up with 26 points on top of 13 rebounds and 10 assists and provided the unbeaten Express with a lot of intangibles in extra time that helped the team secure a third straight win.

"It was actually the result of hard work before the conference started," said Air21 head coach Bo Perasol, who also had sparkling contributions from Gary David, Mark Telan and rookie Arwind Santos in achieving the franchise's best start ever in the conference.

Late Sports
More stories on A29 to 32

David struggled in the early going but found his rhythm while the Express were waging a comeback from 16 points down in the third quarter.

The key moment for David came when he drilled in a three-pointer off a Daniels' screen at the corner with 10.3 seconds left in regulation that sent the roller-coaster match into overtime.

It was a face-saving triple actually for David. With the Express coming off a timeout and staring at a two-point deficit, David could not find a receiver for the inbounds pass and took a timeout his team did not have.

The Express were slapped with a technical foul and Don Allado made the foul shot to increase the Phone Pals lead to three, 10.3 ticks remaining.

With his confidence soaring, David teamed up with Daniels in exploiting the absence of Phone Pals import JJ Sullinger, who left the match due to cramps with three minutes left in overtime.

Talk 'N Text coach Derrick Pumaren and the Phone Pals dropped their second game after three games.

The scores:

First Game

AIR21 124—Daniels 26, Telan 21, David 20, Santos, 15, Se 12, Canaleta 10, Arboleda 9, Dimaunahan 8, Torion 2, Andaya 1, Bernardo 0.

TALK 'N TEXT 118—Sullinger 31, Washington 25, Allado 20, Belano 12, Cardona 9, De Ocampo 8, Billones 6, Carey 5, Fran 2, Noble 0, Pablo 0.

Quarters: 18-28, 44-60, 74-83, 107-107, 124-118.

Second Game

BARANGAY GINEBRA 111—Nealy 21, Tubid 20, Salvacion 20, Hatfield 17, Abarrientos 12, Mamaril 5, Holper 4, Echavez 2, Macapagal 0, Menk 0, Santos 0.

RED BULL 105—Fonacier 23, Penny 18, Najorda 13, Robinson 10, Villanueva 10, Baguio 9, Hrabak 7, Cruz 6, Alvarez 5, Sharma 4, Ybañez 0.

Quarters: 42-29, 67-50, 88-80, 111-105

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DPWH to close Tullahan Bridge soon

Rehab work to start this week despite mayor's opposition

By Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

AN OFFICIAL OF THE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC Works and Highways yesterday advised motorists to start avoiding the 73-year-old Tullahan Bridge in Valenzuela City as both lanes will be closed to traffic any time this week to pave the way for its rehabilitation.

However, despite weeks of discussions with the DPWH, Mayor Sherwin Gatchalian is still opposed to the scheduled closure as he fears it would paralyze traffic in his city.

Project engineer Ed Santos said the instruction of Public Works Secretary Manuel Bonoan was clear: The construction should proceed.

But in an interview with the INQUIRER, Gatchalian said, "We should go back to the drawing board."

"I am not opposed to the construction. We only want a viable rerouting scheme. Until a viable rerouting scheme is shown, we will not agree to the closure," the mayor added.

Following the dry run last Friday of a traffic rerouting scheme, Santos said they will close the bridge this week or as soon as construction of two foot bridges for pedestrians is done.

"The bridge already poses a danger to the public. We will push through with the closure so we can start the construction this week," he added. Rehabilitation of the bridge is expected to be completed within five months.

For his part, Gatchalian said he was not satisfied with the results of the dry run on Friday. "The dry run should be continued because there are still many unforeseen events," he said.

He lamented that he was trapped in Barangay Marulas for almost an hour, when traffic there used to be moderate.

He and three other mayors in the northern part of Metro Manila are pushing for a 60-day postponement of the construction.

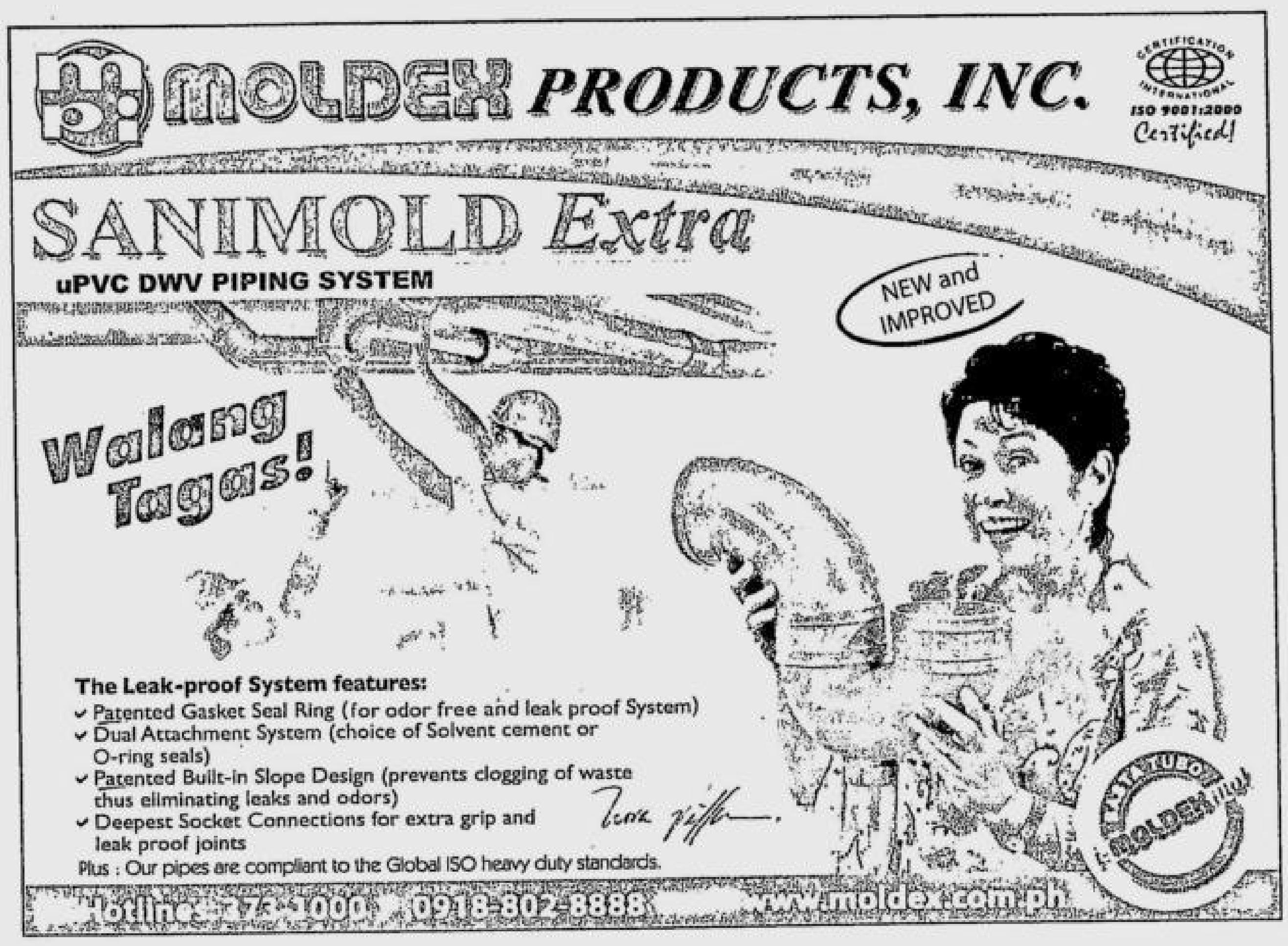
According to Gatchalian, closing the bridge would paralyze traffic on the busy MacArthur Highway which connects the cities of Caloocan and Malabon to Valenzuela and towns in Bulacan. But the DPWH rejected the proposal, saying the bridge can collapse any time as its steel parts are already corroded.

"They have been saying that for five years," Gatchalian told the INQUIRER.

Santos, however, was adamant. "Now is the right time to start the construction," he said.

Construction workers should take advantage of the good weather, the start of the summer vacation and the ongoing construction of a bridge in Meycauayan, Bulacan which has reduced the volume of vehicles on the southbound lane, he added.

He warned that if construction is postponed for two months, as suggested by the mayors, the situation could become more difficult.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SOME portions of the railings of Zamora Bridge in Pandacan are missing. Will those concerned do something about this to prevent accidents from happening?

—JAMILA VERIDIANO, 26, Sta. Mesa, Manila

Pasong Tamo Extension in Makati City near Fort Bonifacio's Gate 3 is such a mess. *Wala na ngang* streetlights *kapag gabi, ginagawa pang tambakan ng basura, tapos sinisigaan pa ito.* To think *na malapit yung tambakan sa* Petron gasoline station (There are no streetlights in the area which is being turned into a dump. Worse, they even burn the garbage. To think that the dump is near a Petron gasoline station)!

—RODNEY COLLANTES, 26, Pasay City

Some officials will tolerate everything, even at the expense of many, to benefit a few voters. Why do they allow hawkers and tricycles to eat up a lot of street space under the Alabang viaduct, creating a traffic nightmare for ordinary citizens like us? These tricycle drivers and vendors don't follow laws, yet local officials/candidates allow them to violate traffic rules without being punished. Vendors, especially at night, occupy three of the four lanes and even the sidewalks, while drivers of tricycles, which are not allowed on the main street, act as if they are the king of the road. Hope city officials will do something about this.

—NEREO COSTUNA, 39, Cavite

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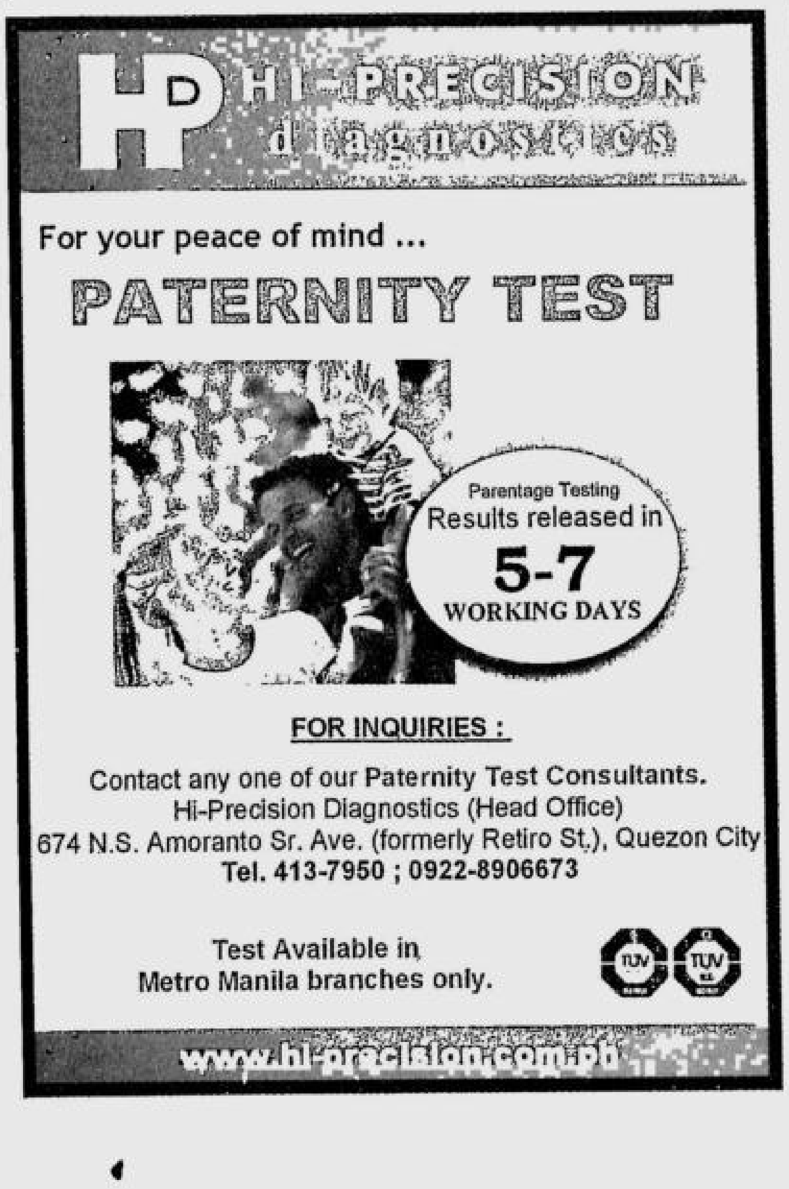
Cyril L. Bonabente, Inquirer Research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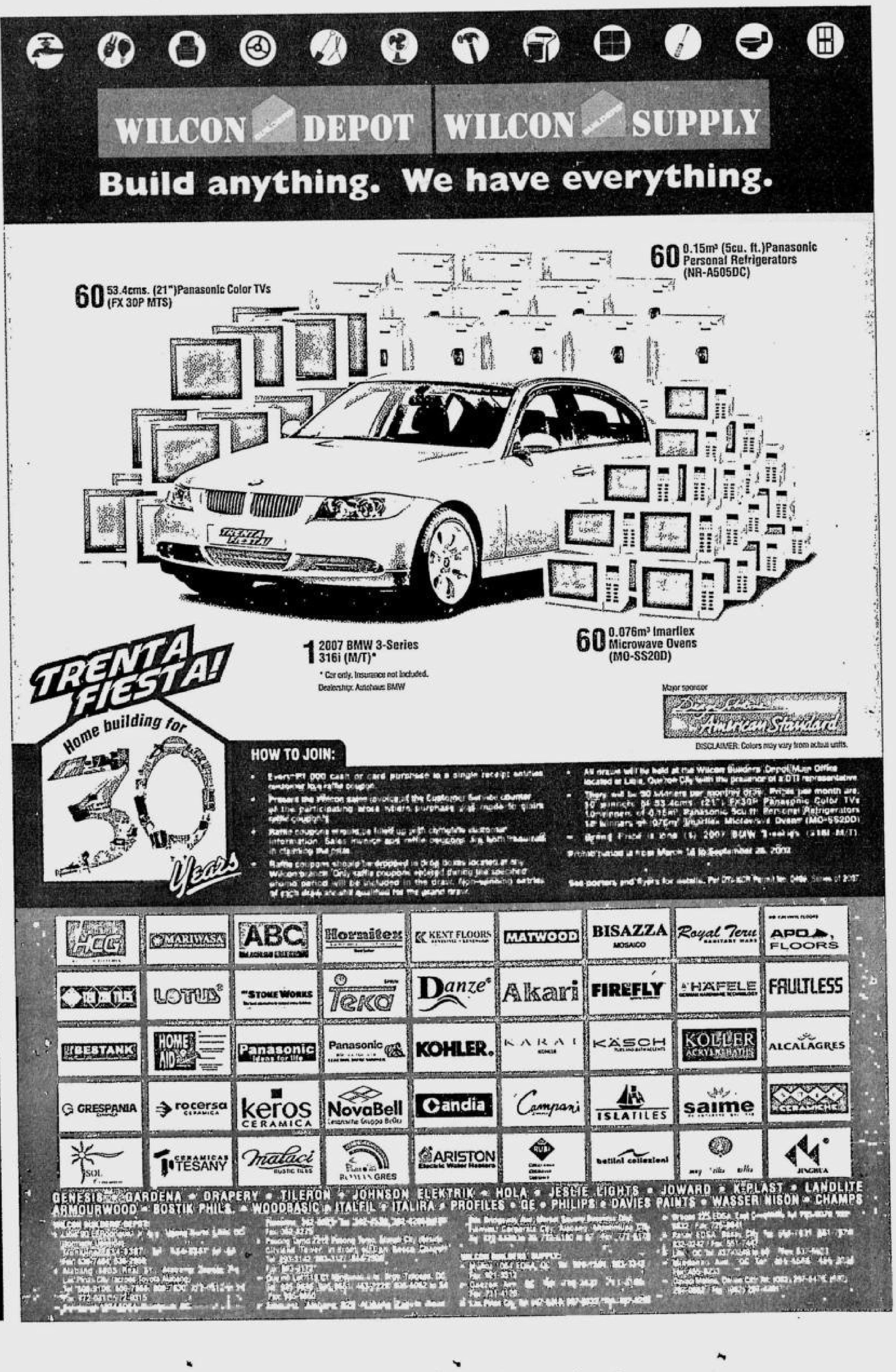
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METRO MANILA ACCIDENT REPORTING AND ANALYSIS REPORT

MMDA: Speeding top cause of mishaps in 2006

By DJ Yap

METRO MOTORISTS WHO WANT TO AVOID accidents would do well to remember the following: Drive slowly, be careful when overtaking and stay alert.

According to the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority, the top three causes of traffic accidents last year were driving too fast, faulty overtaking and inattentiveness.

Based on the agency's annual report for 2006, most of the vehicular mishaps were caused by drivers who were speeding, accounting for 6,233 cases, 64 of which were fatal.

In close second were impatient drivers who overtook other cars with 5,848 cases, seven of which were deadly, the MMDA said in its "Metro Manila Accident Reporting and Analysis System" report.

Inattentive drivers came in third with 5,238 cases, but they accounted for the biggest number of fatal mishaps at 155, records showed.

Making wrong turns and disobeying signs or traffic signals also figured highly in the list, as well as tailgating or "getting too close" to the vehicle in front, the MMDA said.

Falling asleep was also a cause of accidents, accounting for 118 cases although none were fatal, records showed.

Suspected cases of driving under the influence of alcohol only numbered 14, with one fatal incident and nine that resulted in injuries.

Suspected mechanical defects accounted for 152 cases, while lost brakes caused a dozen mishaps, the MMDA said.

Interestingly, a motorist figured in an accident for "evading an animal that was crossing" the road.

Another accident was caused by a "greasy pavement," while one more was attributed to "hanging" or when a vehicle has to stop while going up an incline or steep slope.

Cops release sketch of slay suspect

By Allison W. Lopez

A POLICE OFFICIAL YESTERDAY SAID THEY have come up with a sketch of one of the suspects in the killing of businessman Federico "Rico" Delgado in Malate, Manila on March 10.

Chief Insp. Alex Yanquiling of the Manila Police District homicide division said they based the sketch of the suspect on the description given by witness Analiza Pesico.

He added, however, that they have yet to talk to the suspect who, according to him, checked into a hospital in Makati City to undergo detox two days after the incident.

Yanquiling refused to identify the suspect although SP04 Maying de la Cruz described him based on the sketch as around 43 to 45 years old, with short hair and "good-looking features."

According to Pesico, the man had "a good build and was around 5' 8" tall."

Delgado, 51, was stabbed dead by two unidentified men inside his penthouse at the Mayflower building on Leon Guinto Street. Pesico, his companion, was beaten up by the suspects although she was able to escape and report the incident to the police.

Yanquiling said Pesico, who is now in their custody, saw the face of one of the suspects when he removed his ski mask while trying to open a vault inside the dresser.

"He was probably sweating hard and thought that Analiza was already unconscious at the time," he added.

The vault's contents are still not known but investigators believe it contained "important documents" since Rico's valuables were left untouched.

Police also found the name "Franco" written in blood on the wall near Rico's body. Franco was later identified as the victim's older brother.

The victim's eldest sister, Isabel, however, denied her sibling's involvement in the murder and said there were no financial disputes among them. The Delgados own Citadel Corp., which is engaged in shipping, manning, cargo, real estate and other businesses. The siblings are all board directors in the company.

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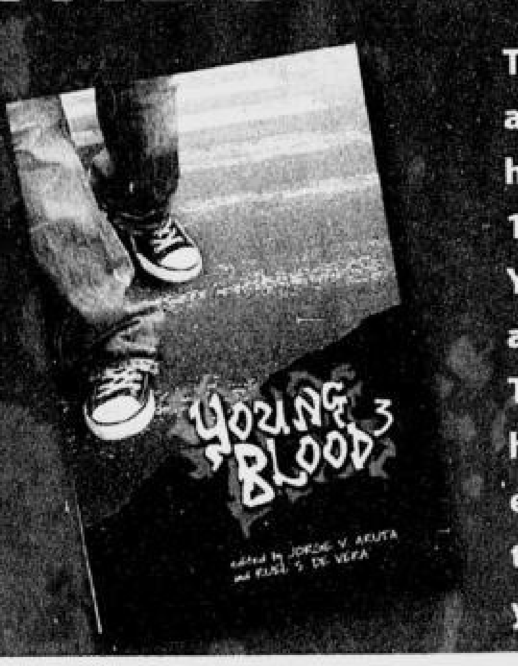

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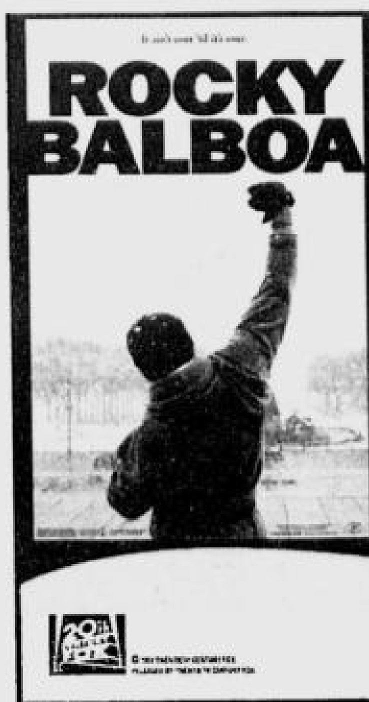

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350 Iraqis poisoned in chlorine bomb attacks

DEMONSTRATORS opposed to the Iraq war march across the Memorial Bridge in Washington March 17 in marking the fourth anniversary of the beginning of the war. The Lincoln Memorial is in the background. AP

BAGHDAD—AT LEAST 350 IRAQI CIVILIANS needed hospital treatment after insurgents detonated three trucks filled with toxic chlorine gas, killing two policemen, the US military said on Saturday.

Meanwhile the prime ministers of Iraq and Australia, at a news conference in Baghdad, refused to give any timetable for the withdrawal of Australian troops from the country.

Friday's gas attack was the seventh this year in which insurgents have used chemical bombs on civilians and security forces, in what appears to be a new tactic adopted by al-Qaida militants.

The attacks were carried out between 4:11 p.m. (1311 GMT) and 7:13 p.m. on Friday, two of them just south of the town of Fallujah and one northeast of the nearby city of Ramadi, both hotbeds of al-Qaida militants in the Anbar province.

"Approximately 350 Iraqi civilians and six coalition force members were treated for chlorine gas exposure," said Lt. Roger Hollenbeck of the US-led Multinational Division West, based in Ramadi.

Iraqi state television reported that at least six people were killed in the blasts, but the US military could initially only confirm the deaths of two Iraqi policemen in the second explosion, in Ameriyah outside Fallujah.

"Coalition forces confirmed that the Ameriyah citizens exposed to the chlorine were treated locally for symptoms ranging from minor skin and lung irritation to vomiting," Hollenbeck said in a statement.

In each attack a suicide bomber detonated a vehicle packed with explosives and gas canisters near police and civilian targets.

Iraqi interior ministry operations director Brig. Gen. Abdel Karim Khalaf confirmed the bombings and suggested they may have been carried out in revenge for recent government successes against insurgents in Ramadi.

Sunni tribes from Anbar have united in a coalition to oppose al-Qaida, sending thousands of young men to join the government security forces and cooperating with US and Iraqi commanders.

In response the insurgents have modified their tactics, adding gas bombs to their arsenal and striking soft targets in the belt of small towns around the capital that are at present beyond the reach of the security plan.

The Australian and Iraqi premiers on Saturday vowed to fight "terrorists" in Iraq and refused to give a timetable for a withdrawal of Australian forces. *AFP*

Blair destroyed trust in politics, says watchdog

LONDON—BRITAIN'S PUBLIC STANDARDS watchdog has launched a stinging attack on Tony Blair, accusing the prime minister of undermining trust in politics after coming to power 10 years ago promising to be "purer than pure."

A "cash-for-honors" scandal has dogged Blair's last months in office and he has twice been questioned by police as a witness. Blair is expected to stand down by July.

Police investigating allegations that political parties illegally nominated people for state honors in return for loans are now also trying to discover whether any of Blair's aides sought to conceal evidence.

"I suspect Blair and his government are going to be as strongly associated with the loss of public trust as (former Conservative Prime Minister John) Major's was with sleaze," standards watchdog Alistair Graham told the Sunday Times in an interview.

"Blair has betrayed himself. He set such a high bar for people to judge him and he has fallen well below the standards he set for himself," said Graham, due to step down in April as chair of the Committee for Standards in Public Life.

The independent committee was set up by the previous Conservative government.

In the latest twist in the affair, biotechnology businessman Christopher Evans, one of the Labor donors caught up in the scandal, has admitted discussing state honors with the party's chief fundraiser, Lord Levy.

But Evans, in a letter to business partners obtained by The Sunday Telegraph, said Levy never offered him anything in return for his loan to the party.

In January, Levy was arrested on suspicion of conspiracy to pervert the course of justice and close Blair aide Ruth Turner was arrested on suspicion of perverting the course of justice.

Both were released without charge.

In the letter to partners in his company Merlin Biosciences, quoted by the Telegraph, Evans said "It is my deepest and sincere conviction that I have done nothing wrong here at all and I have repeatedly made that clear to the police." *Reuters*

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SILENT DAY Balinese dancers perform the annual ritual ceremony of Nyepi (Silent day) in Jakarta March 18. The Hindu minority in the world's biggest Muslim country will in the ritual retreat from daily activities and modern technologies including electricity. REUTERS

WORLDBRIEFS

G8 plus Five say climate problem is urgent

POTSDAM, GERMANY—Seeking to kickstart stalled talks on climate change, the world's 13 major industrialized and emerging economies found seven broad areas of accord for tackling global warming and its effects during a two-day meeting here. But the United States blocked consensus for supporting the carbon market, the centerpiece of the UN Kyoto Protocol's legally binding approach for tackling the greenhouse gases that cause the problem. The meeting gathered environment ministers from the Group of Eight industrialized countries (Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Russia and the United States) and Brazil, China, India, Mexico and South Africa. The ministers endorsed scientific evidence about global warming and climate change and agreed that the solutions for tackling it needed contributions from everyone, especially from industrialized countries, delegates said. They also agreed that measures on climate change should not penalize developing countries' drive for prosperity, that poor countries needed more help to adapt to climate shift, and that measures to stop deforestation should be stepped up. *AFP*

Finns vote in neck-and-neck election

HELSINKI—Finland's Prime Minister Matti Vanhanen appears to have a good chance of remaining in power as voters go to the ballot box on Sunday, although he may be swapping coalition partners in a three-horse political race. Vanhanen's Center Party has a narrow lead in the polls with slightly less than a quarter of the vote, helped in part by Finland enjoying the strongest growth of all euro-zone economies. His co-ruling Social Democratic Party (SDP) partners are not far behind and neither are the opposition conservative National Coalition. Political analysts say that if the conservatives unseat the SDP as the second largest party, possible given recent gains in opinion polls, Vanhanen may opt to turn his current center-left coalition into a center-right coalition. It is not impossible, although less likely, that the Social Democrats and the conservatives, out of power for four years, could also form a government. They have done so in the past. However, the most likely scenario is of the current coalition continuing. *Reuters*

Passenger plane crashes in Russia; 6 die

MOSCOW—At least six people died and around 20 were injured when a plane crash-landed in Russia on Saturday in heavy fog, officials and the carrier said. The Tu-134 with 57 people on board was flying from the Siberian city of Surgut to Samara on the Volga river, where it crashed as it was trying to land at the airport. "The fog was very heavy and the plane's wing touched the ground," said an Emergency Ministry spokesperson. "Its fuselage then collapsed and it crash-landed." *Reuters*

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Editor Luverne B. Gueco

New Palestinian unity gov't takes power

PALESTINIAN Prime Minister and leader of the Hamas party Ismail Haniya (left) speaks with Palestinian Fatah party strongman Mohammed Dahlan, following a vote by MPs approving the long awaited unity government in Gaza City March 17. AFP

GAZA CITY—THE NEW PALESTINIAN UNITY government holds its first cabinet meeting in Gaza City on Sunday, with ministers in the Israeli-occupied West Bank participating from Ramallah via video link.

The landmark coalition uniting rival factions Fatah and Hamas was sworn in on Saturday, vowing to end a year-long international aid boycott that has crippled the economy of the Palestinian territories.

Israel has refused to have any contacts with the new government, saying it fails to meet any of the Quartet's three conditions for acceptance—renouncing violence, recognizing Israel and honoring past peace accords.

Ministers in the West Bank will have to take part in the new administration's first cabinet meeting by video link because of Israeli restrictions on travel between the Palestinian territories.

The new government unites the secular Fatah party of Palestinian president Mahmuod Abbas with the Islamist Hamas movement of prime minister Ismail Haniya.

But the new team seemed unlikely to meet international demands as Haniya on Saturday defiantly proclaimed the Palestinians' right to resist against Israel.

Israel called on the Quartet of Middle East mediators—the United States, European Union, United Nations and Russia—to maintain the aid freeze imposed on the Palestinian Authority one year ago after the rise to power of Hamas.

Haniya was both tough and conciliatory in his speech to parliament on Saturday, which was followed by a decisive 83-3 vote to approve the Fatah-Hamas coalition after months of political wrangling and deadly internecine clashes that killed scores of people.

Norway quickly announced that it would now recognize the Fatah-Hamas government, Foreign Minister Jonas Gahr Stoere saying in Oslo he was satisfied the unity government had taken sufficient steps towards meeting international conditions for acceptance.

Russia and France have also indicated a willingness to work with the Fatah-Hamas coalition.

Arab countries including Syria, Jordan, Qatar and Yemen called for the aid freeze to end, and the internationally respected new finance minister, Salam Fayyad, said the Palestinian government would not survive without international aid.

New foreign minister Ziad Abu Amr lashed out at Israel's continued rejection of the unity government, the first cabinet to include both Fatah and Hamas.

"The Israeli government is weak and is running away from negotiations by clinging to old irrational positions," he told AFP.

Although the United States has withheld judgment on the unity government, Israeli officials quietly fear some Quartet members will now end the aid freeze as the Palestinian economy continues to nosedive.

"We feel that the wind is beginning to change among certain European countries who seem ready to restart their aid, which would constitute a victory for Hamas," a senior Israeli foreign ministry official told AFP on condition of anonymity.

In Berlin, the German presidency of the European Union said it was prepared to cooperate with a legitimate Palestinian government which would adopt a platform in line with internationally set conditions for Middle East peace.

"The Presidency of the EU recalls the readiness of the EU to work with and to resume its assistance to a legitimate Palestinian government adopting a platform reflecting the Quartet principles," Germany said in a statement. *AFP*

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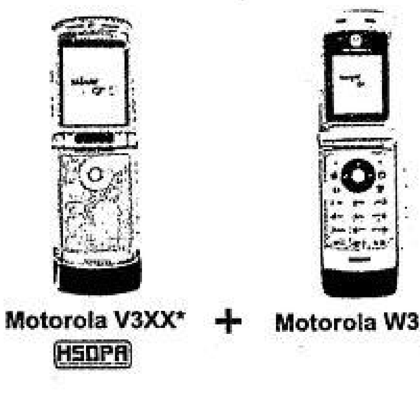

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WHAT'S INSIDE
Lopsided scoring rubs salt on Peñalosa's defeat /A30

Red-hot Pagulayan rules Japan Open /A30

Marquez wants Pacquiao

Barrera conqueror still smarting from 2004 draw

HAVING SETTLED THE BUSINESS AT HAND, JUAN MANUEL MARquez can now train his sights at the direction of one of the world's best pound-for-pound fighters today: Manny Pacquiao.

Marquez again flaunted his superior technical skills in gutting out a unanimous decision triumph over fellow Mexican ring legend Marco Antonio Barrera in Las Vegas *(See fight story on A31)*, setting him up for a rematch that could very well define his career.

And with the WBC super featherweight belt that came with the victory now wrapped around his waist, Marquez has enough leverage to negotiate for a fight against the Filipino ring sensation—despite a strong clamor from fans to stage a Pacquiao-Barrera rematch.

Marquez has long wanted a rematch against the hard-punching Filipino, especially after getting knocked down three times in their first meeting in May 2004 and then battling back to forge a controversial draw.

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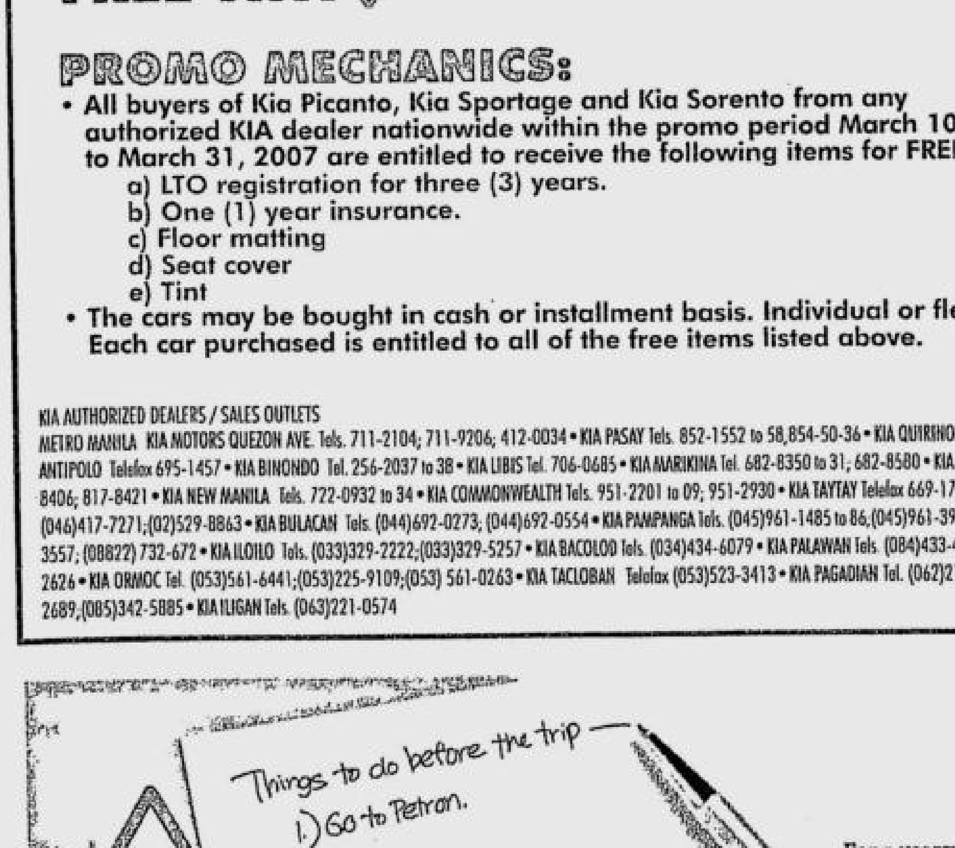

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Peñalosa did the Filipino proud (Mexican did not fight like a champ)

BARE EYE

Recah Trinidad

IT WAS, HONESTLY SPEAKING, A CLOSE fight.

But, based on the final scores submitted by the three judges, the bout was a horrible mismatch.

A plain review of the one-sided scoring would also show that Gerry Peñalosa managed to win only a single round in his world super bantamweight challenge against Mexican Daniel Ponce de Leon in Las Vegas yesterday.

That is a big, fat lie.

Peñalosa surpassed himself and came close enough to scoring an upset.

* * *

OK, Peñalosa, 34, fell short and failed to wrest the crown. But the gallant Filipino hardly looked a loser.

In fact, it cannot be openly claimed Ponce de Leon had clearly retained his crown.

The champion did not fight like a champ. The Mexican was many times on the receiving end of Peñalosa's sharp, clinical attack.

It was just too bad that Peñalosa, smaller and older, failed to sustain his fiery offensive. He would often turn overcautious and tentative.

* * *

Fight scholar Dennis Principe was right.

Peñalosa made good his vow to make his countrymen proud.

Principe would bare at the ABS-CBN studios yesterday how Peñalosa had told him before departure for the United States that he would never shame the Filipino in his title fight against Ponce de Leon.

Said Principe: "Peñalosa fought like a true, red-blooded Filipino warrior, (Ponce) de Leon did not fight like a true Mexican."

* * *

In fact, Principe noted, Ponce de Leon suddenly started speaking a different language and fought like a Japanese in the last three rounds.

By this, Principe meant Ponce de Leon decided to run away in the closing rounds, as though riding a bike, in the tradition of Matsunori Tokuyama, the elongated Japanese who had frustrated Peñalosa's final try to regain the WBC 115-lb crown.

For his part, fight expert Ronnie Nathanielsz said the WBO should be blasted for the hideous scoring.

He said WBO is a disgrace to world boxing, citing anew the robbery perpetrated by the organization against Z Gorres right in his home turf Cebu last month.

* * *

There was no way yesterday's fight was that wide.

The sickening disparity was, however, traced by sportsman/lawyer Rudy Salud to what he called the faulty system adopted in unified scoring.

"The unified scoring system did not allow draws, no matter what, in any round," Salud explained.

The truth, Salud added, is that there were rounds which should have been scored as draws in Peñalosa's title bid yesterday.

Plainly put, Salud said, the officials would, in case of a doubt, just base their judgment on subjective preference, not on what had honestly taken place during a round.

* * *

Repeat: Peñalosa hardly looked the awful loser. Maybe his only fault was in having fought in a heavier division.

Of course, he had made everything look possible at certain brilliant moments in the close fight.

Peñalosa, smaller, was visibly more masterful. He also succeeded in disproving critics, including this reporter, who said he was waging a surreal challenge for a world crown.

Despite built-in limitations, Peñalosa blasted brutal barriers in boxing.

He has earned the right to be installed among Filipino boxing greats of all time.

Lopsided scoring rubs salt on Peñalosa's defeat

WORLD BOXING ORGANIZATION SUPER bantamweight champion Daniel Ponce de Leon kept his title yesterday with a unanimous decision win over Filipino Gerry Peñalosa at the Mandalay Bay Resort and Casino in Las Vegas, but the lopsided scoring by the judges drew heavy criticism.

Ponce de Leon, who improved to 31-1 (28 KOs), won by scores of 119-109, 119-109 and 120-108.

According to a report from the boxing website maxboxing.com., however, the writers in the press row saw a much closer bout that could have gone either way.

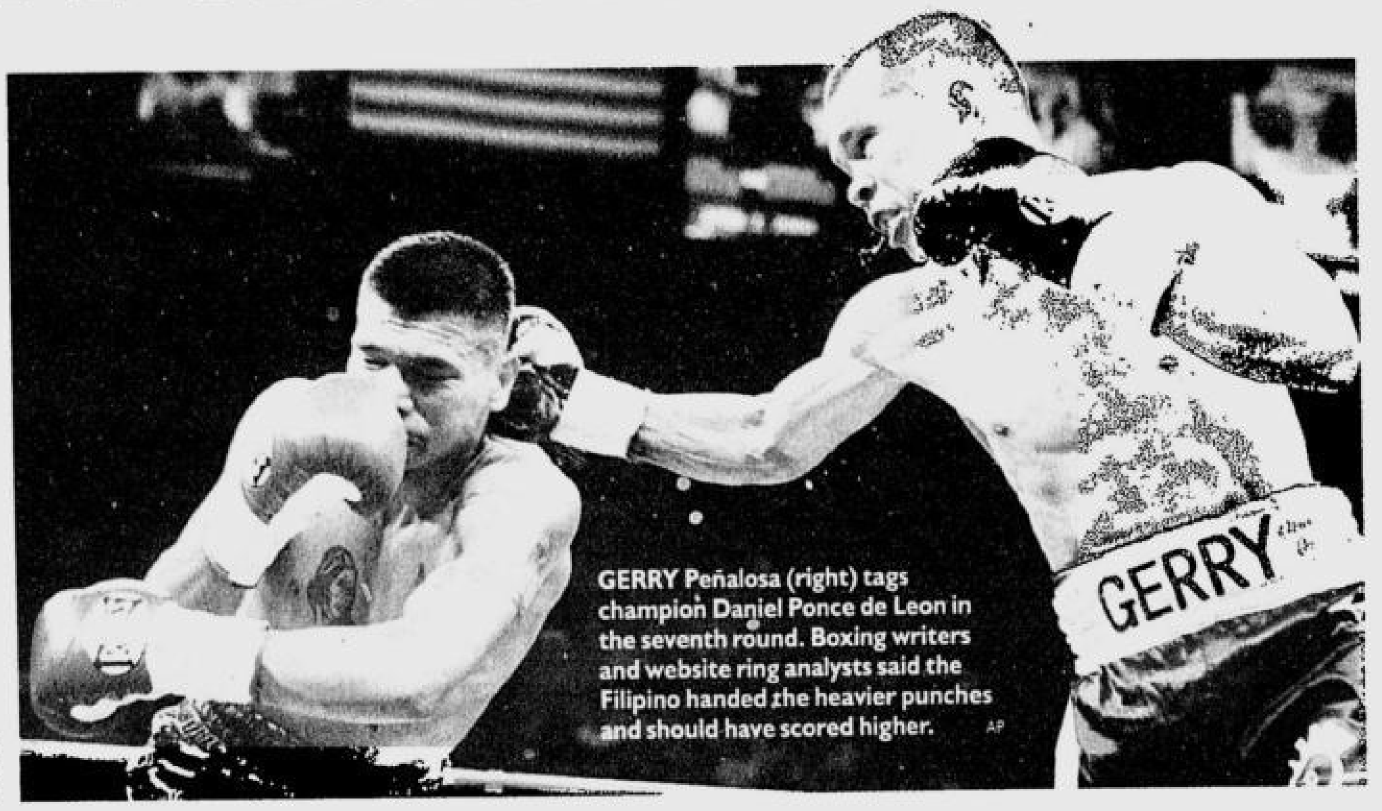
Those favoring Ponce de Leon thought he was the busier fighter in a slight majority of the rounds. Those favoring Peñalosa, now 51-6-2 (35 KOs), thought the Filipino veteran landed the cleaner and harder power punches to the titleholder's stationary head in the majority of the 12 rounds.

"How veteran judge Dave Moretti scored all 12 rounds for Ponce de Leon was beyond anyone sitting in the media section," the website report said.

"The 119-109 scorecards of Chuck Giampa and Nelson Vazquez were equally head scratching. Vazquez only scored the second round for Peñalosa. Giampa only scored the 11th for the 34-year-old from the Philippines."

ESPN.com had it 115-113 for Ponce de Leon, but several members of the boxing media had Peñalosa winning a close decision.

Maxboxing.com said Ponce de Leon took the first round with stiff jab and hard left hand whacks to the right side of Peñalosa's body, but the skilled Filipino southpaw teed off on the younger, stronger Mexican with well-timed counter right hooks and left crosses for the next six rounds.



GERRY Peñalosa (right) tags champion Daniel Ponce de Leon in the seventh round. Boxing writers and website ring analysts said the Filipino handed the heavier punches and should have scored higher. AP

"Ponce de Leon did his best to impose his will on Peñalosa, focusing almost exclusively on the body in the fourth round," the report said. "But once he realized that the veteran could take his best shot, he began to give up ground to the Filipino, looking a bit bewildered as he tried to figure out a way to land a punch that would turn the tide.

"Ponce de Leon never found that one big punch to hurt or floor Peñalosa."

Ponce de Leon threw a total of 1,399 punches in the bout, according to CompuBox, the third all-time total for a junior featherweight. In the end that was what the official judges paid attention to.

Peñalosa's face was marked up after the fight, but he has never been stopped. He was surprised by the result, according to espn.com.

"I'm really disappointed," said Peñalosa, who won a world junior bantamweight belt in 1997 and made three defenses. "I thought I won that fight. I want a rematch."

Gabi wins in undercard

Earlier, Davao City bomber Diosdado Gabi scored a second-round TKO over Antonio Maria Cochero (17-5-1, 13 KOs) in one of the preliminaries.

A Gabi right hand sent Cochero down on the seat of his pants and the fight was halted at 2:59 of the second round.

The win improved the southpaw Gabi's record to 29-3-1, with 21 KOs, and may line him up for yet another crack at a world title. *With a report from Salven L. Lagumbay, Contributor*

Marquez wants Pacquiao rematch

From page A29

"It is like a small thorn in a lion's paw," Marquez once told boxingconfidential.com. "I want to remove that thorn, of drawing with Pacquiao, from my paw."

The last time a rematch was in the works, Marquez's camp turned down a purse offer from Top Rank and opted for a fight against Chris John at a lower purse. Marquez lost that fight.

Several boxing experts were hoping for a Barrera victory at the Mandalay Bay in Las Vegas that would have set the stage for a megabuck fight between the Mexican and Pacquiao, who had already crossed paths before.

Pacquiao knocked Barrera out in the 11th round of their 2003 battle in San Antonio, Texas.

But Barrera had previously played it coy when asked on his thoughts on a lucrative rematch against Pacquiao.

"I am past that fight," Barrera had told boxingconfidential.com in a prior interview. "I wanted it. But if it does not happen, it does not happen. I am looking to retire in 2007."

While Pacquiao-Barrera is still a hot item, Marquez can now make a case for himself as the reigning world super featherweight champion.

Still any rematch between Pacquiao and either of the two Mexicans will need a lot of ironing out, boxing experts say.

Marquez and Barrera are both promoted by Oscar De La Hoya's Golden Boy Promotions while Pacquiao is still signed to Bob Arum's Top Rank.

Golden Boy Promotions and Top Rank are currently entangled in a legal mess as both companies claim to have a legitimate right to promote Pacquiao, who signed contracts and took bonuses from both camps.

Empire King gets back at Real Spicy

By Musong R. Castillo

CARMONA, CAVITE—FAR SECOND CHOICE Empire King came up with a late burst of speed under heavy punishment from Jaja Ladiana yesterday and upset the highly fancied Real Spicy to win the 2007 Philracom Commissioners' Cup at the San Lazaro track here.

Empire King, flashing the form that earned him the Gold Cup two years ago, set the pace through most of the 1,750-meter race before outduelling Real Spicy in the dash to the finish.

The win by Empire King, worth P720,000, shattered the myth of invincibility that has cloaked Real Spicy since February last year.

Real Spicy, who cornered P855,304 out of the total daily double handle of P986,536, suffered his first loss in his last 15 starts under Jessie B. Guce, who failed to wheel him out of traffic early and paid dearly for it.

Longest shot Native Land, with veteran Manolito Daquis on top, held the lead briefly at the far turn and then checked in third three lengths behind, nipping Manhattan for P120,000.

Manhattan, who was partnered by ace Jonathan B. Hernandez, settled for P60,000.

Empire King, the six-year-old chestnut son of American stallion Perfect Halo out of New Zealand broodmare Cartada Nueve, actually looked like a goner in the backstretch after grappling for the lead with Native Land early.

Empire King clocked an impressive 1 minute and 49.5 seconds (10-24-24'-25-25').

Pagunsan falters in end with 76

SANYA, CHINA—CHAPCHAI NIRAT COMPLETED A start-to-finish victory at the TCL Classic on Sunday, becoming the third Thai to win an event co-sanctioned by the Asian and European tours.

The 23-year-old, who led the $1 million event from opening day after smashing the course record with a 61, closed out with a one-under 71 at Yalong Bay Golf Club and finished three clear of Argentinean Rafael Echenique (68). Chapchai totalled 22-under 266.

Another Thai, Prayad Marksaeng, finished third after a 67 while Liang Wenchong, winner of the Clariden Leu Singapore Masters last week, wound up sixth, seven shots adrift after a 70.

Juvic Pagunsan floundered in the final round with a 76 after shooting 68-68-69 and wound up at seven-under 281. The lone Filipino survivor had six bogeys for nines of 40-36. *Asian Tour*

MARIKINA'S FINEST: Players and team officials of CKP 168 pose for posterity after beating Fortune Tobacco, 88-81, in the deciding match of their recent championship series in the De Guzman-Marikina Open at the Marikina Sports Center. Among those in photo are Martin Syjuco, Jun Echavez, Jomar Tierra, assistant coach Boyet Fernandez, Dr. John Lim, Alvin Pua, head coach Adonis Tierra (first to seventh from left), Allan Evangelista, Galen Cacha, Ira Buyco, Howard Flor, Mark Magsumbol, Rep. Del De Guzman, playing team owner William Fong, Derrick Hubalde, Paeng Santos, Ogie Gumatay, JR Naguit, MVP Ronnie Zagala, team manager Wilf Fong, and trainer Joel Parcotilo, Marvin Poloyapoy, Moy de Guzman, Erwin Sta. Maria and Roel Capati.

SPORTSWATCH

Pangilinan, PBL execs discuss Seaba stint

SAMAHANG BASKETBOL NG PILIPINAS PRESIDENT MANNY V. PANGILINAN, Harbour Centre owner Mikee Romero, PBL commissioner Chino Trinidad and PBL chair Gil Angeles will appear together in a special session of the PSA Forum tomorrow at the main function room of the Pantalan Restaurant in Manila. The basketball officials will talk about the country's coming stint in the Seaba Champions Cup in Jakarta. Joining them in the public sports program aired over dzSR Sports Radio 918 and sponsored by Pagcor, Manila Mayor Lito Atienza and Manila Sports Council chair Ali Atienza are coach Junel Baculi and the 16 players comprising the RP team. The session's first part features the officials of the Mitsubishi Lancer International junior tennis championships and boxing patron Liza Elorde, who will discuss the 7th Gabriel "Flash" Elorde Boxing Awards Night Banquet of Champions on March 25.

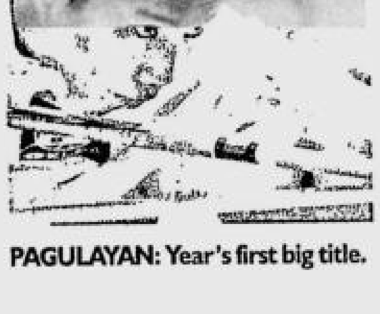
5 more venues for Checkmate classes

LA SALLE GREEN HILLS IN SAN JUAN AND FOUR WALTER MART branches are the newest venues for the Checkmate summer chess clinics sponsored by Milo, according to the organizing Metropolitan Chess Club. Four series of sessions will be held on the LSGH campus. The first set of classes will be held from 8 a.m. to 12 noon from today to March 31 at the school's Cesar A. Cruz activity center. The other schedules are April 9-21, April 30-May 12 and May 21-Jun 2. Classes will be held daily at Walter Mart branches in Makati, Sta. Rosa, Laguna; Plaridel, Bulacan; and Nueva Ecija.

'Swing Meycauayan' derby kicks off in Makati

THE "SWING MEYCAUAYAN" 5-COCK DERBY, AN EXCLUSIVE SHOWdown among big shots in local cockfighting, fires off today at Makati Coliseum with B-Meg Derby Ace and Gran Matador as sponsors. Derby regulars from Bulacan, Pampanga, Nueva Ecija and Tarlac collide with the members of the National Cockers Association (NCA) and Pinoy Cockers Association of the Philippines (PCAP) invited by derby hosts Mayor Eddie Alarilla and Tony Tan. Slated next Monday is the PCAP 5-cock derby. Willie Villarica's entry WRV Goldline and Gov. Ito Ynares' Binangonan topped the fifth leg derby last March 10. Meanwhile, the WTJ Sports and Amusement Corp., operator of Makati Coliseum, announced yesterday the staging of this year's Makati Invitational 8-Cock Derby on May 28, 30 and June 1.

Red-hot Pagulayan rules Japan 9-Ball Open



PAGULAYAN: Year's first big title.

FORMER WORLD POOL CHAMPION ALEX Pagulayan demolished Taiwanese Ro Li-wen, 9-6, yesterday to win the 17th Japan 9-Ball Open in Tokyo, Japan.

Pagulayan, a native of Cabagan, Isabela, but who is now based in Toronto, Canada, captured the top prize of 1.5 million yen (about P675,00) in clinching his first major title this year.

The 2004 world pool champion had eliminated compatriot and defending champion Antonio Lining, 9-6, to reach the finals.

Pagulayan, also the 2005 US Open champion and 2006 BSCP national titlist in Manila, beat Naoyuki Ooi of Japan in the quarterfinals, 9-6, after hurdling fellow Filipino Rodolfo Luat in the round of 16, 9-5.

Ro Li-wen secured the other title slot at the expense of fellow Taiwanese Kuo Pocheng, 9-6.

Lining made it to the semifinals by ousting Ramil Gallego, 9-5, after surviving Dennis Orcollo, 9-6, in the round of 16.

Also reaching the round-of-16 were Kuo Po-Cheng of Chinese-Taipei, Naoyuki Ooi, 17-year-old Hayato Hijikata and Mekari Tomoki of Japan and former world No. 1 Francisco "Django" Bustamante and Roel Esquillo of the Philippines.

Other Filipinos who saw action were Efren "Bata" Reyes, double world champion Ronato Alcano, Lee Van Corteza, Jharome Peña and last year's runner-up Dondon Razalan.

Advancing to the quarterfinals in the ladies division were Japanese Akimi Kajitani, Kawahara Chihiro, Yukawa Keiko, Fuke Miyuki, Sone Kyoko and Shimizu Kazuko and Lai Hui-shan of Chinese-Taipei.

Marlon Bernardino, Contributor

Arenas is king for a day, lifts Wizards to top

WASHINGTON—GILBERT ARENAS SCORED 30 points and had 11 assists to lead the Washington Wizards past the New Orleans Hornets 125-103 on Saturday, earning the team sole possession of first place in the Southeast Division.

Arenas missed Friday practice to fly to Oakland so he could witness the birth of his first son before returning on an overnight flight the next day.

The long trip appeared to have little effect on his performance, however, as he led all scorers and also became the first player since Tracy McGrady in 2003 to have two four-point plays in one game.

Washington took a half-game lead over the defending NBA champion Miami Heat in the division with the win.

"I'm king of the castle now," a beaming Arenas said. "Right now I'm on top of the charts."

In other games, the Indiana Pacers snapped an 11-game losing streak with an easy 113-90 win over the Atlanta Hawks.

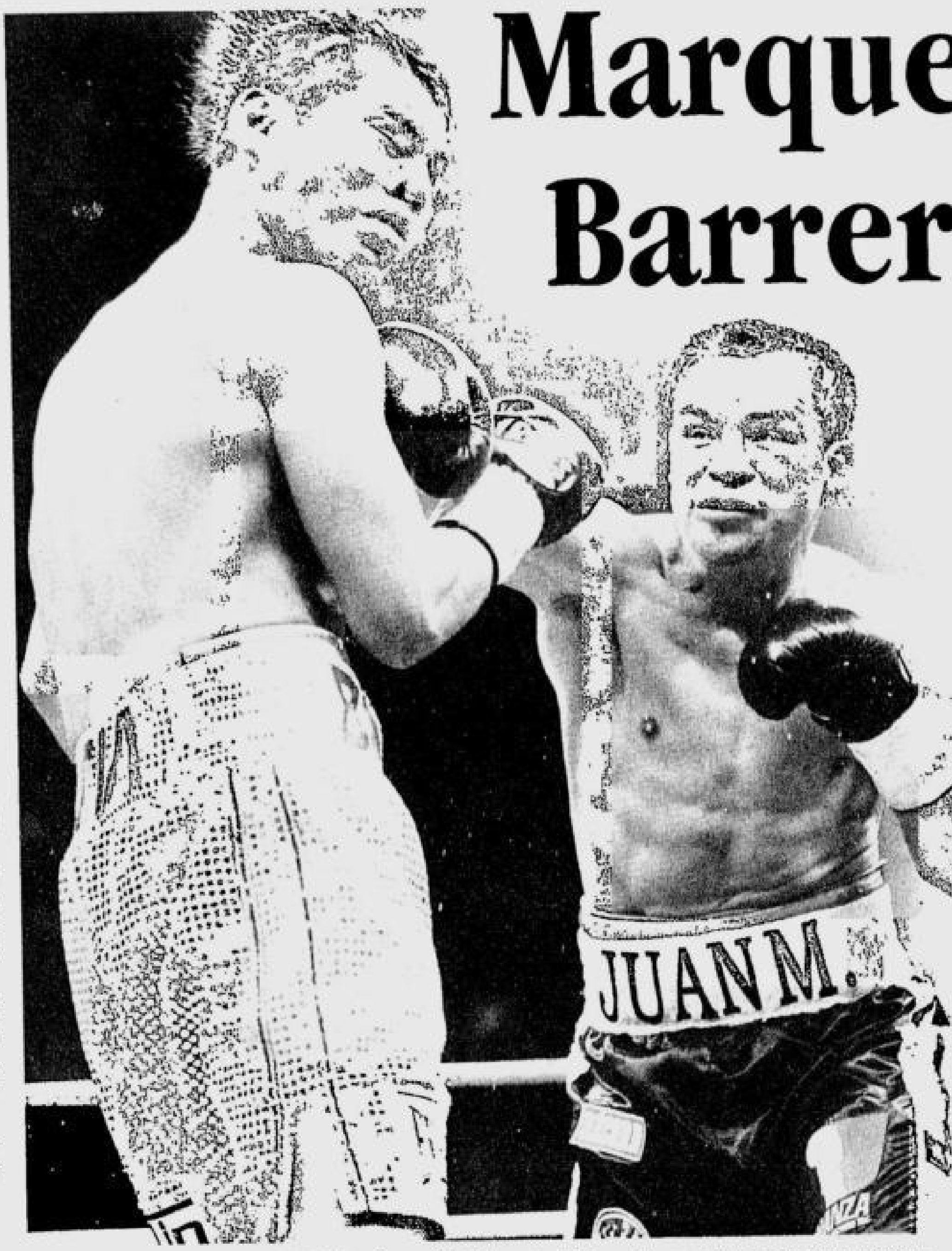
The Cleveland Cavaliers picked up their eighth straight win, an 82-73 decision over the Utah Jazz. LeBron James just missed a triple-double for the Cavs, finishing with 24 points, 17 rebounds and nine assists.

The Boston Celtics beat the San Antonio Spurs for the first time after losing 18 straight to them, scoring a 91-85 win at San Antonio. It was the first win for the Celtics in San Antonio since Feb. 14, 1990.

The Sacramento Kings snapped a five-game losing streak by downing the Orlando Magic 95-83. Reuters

GAME TODAY (Basketball TV)
8 a.m.—Minnesota vs. LA Lakers
(replays @ 4 p.m. & 9:30 p.m.)

Marquez decisions Barrera, wins title



JUAN Manuel Marquez (right) lands a solid right straight on Marco Antonio Barrera's jaw. AP

LAS VEGAS, NEVADA—JUAN MANUEL MARquez took the World Boxing Council super featherweight title from Marco Antonio Barrera, winning a unanimous 12-round decision here Saturday in a showdown of Mexican stars.

Marquez improved to 47-3 with one drawn on judges' scores of 118-109, 116-111 and 116-111. Barrera fell to 64-5, losing in his fifth defense of the crown.

"This was very important to me," Marquez said. "I knew this fight was going to be a war and it was. I won every round."

Marquez, who would like to set up a big-money bout against Filipino superstar Manny Pacquiao, moved up a weight class to challenge Barrera in a matchup of 33-year-old ring veterans.

The title was not the first for Marquez, who took the World Boxing Association and International Boxing Federation featherweight titles in 2003.

In the seventh round came the turning point when Barrera had a point removed by referee Jay Nady for hitting Marquez after Nady had separated the fighters.

Barrera was staggered but hit Marquez with a hard right that forced the challenger's knee to touch the canvas. Nady signaled no knockdown even though television replays showed he was wrong.

"I did everything necessary to win. I don't know what happened to the judges. He was down. I knocked him out," Barrera said.

"What's wrong with the judges? I was winning. I won the fight."

Keith Kizer, director of the Nevada Athletic Commission, said there are no plans to have a replay review system similar to one now in place in New Jersey.

"We don't want anything that will take away from the traditional aspects of the sport," Kizer said. "Replay is something we have thought about for years. Anything is possible with technology growing by leaps and bounds.

"We'll just have to take a closer look at it." *AFP*

Kimi takes F1 opener

MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA—Kimi Raikkonen showed he's the man to step into Michael Schumacher's shoes at Ferrari, winning his first race with his new team at Sunday's season-opening Australian Grand Prix. Raikkonen has already beaten a Schumacher mark at the Italian team. The German had to wait until his seventh race to notch his first win with Ferrari. Raikkonen started from pole position, and led almost throughout the race Sunday to notch his 10th F1 victory and edge world champion Fernando Alonso, who was making his McLaren debut. McLaren teammate Lewis Hamilton, F1's first black driver, finished third. Raikkonen's Ferrari teammate, Felipe Massa, finished sixth after starting the race from the back of the grid. Raikkonen ensured Ferrari maintained its momentum after leading winter testing. *AP*

Hantuchova rules 'Pacific'

INDIAN WELLS, CALIFORNIA—Daniela Hantuchova upset Svetlana Kuznetsova, 6-3, 6-4, for her second Pacific Life Open title and the second of her career on Saturday. Hantuchova won in Indian Wells in 2002 at 18, then lost four finals on the WTA Tour until Saturday. Meanwhile, in the men's semifinals, Rafael Nadal outserved Andy Roddick, 6-4, 6-3, to reach his first final since Wimbledon, and Novak Djokovic became the first teenage finalist in 17 years after the Serb beat another 19-year-old, Andy Murray 6-2, 6-3. No. 18-ranked Hantuchova, who upset Martina Hingis in the championship match five years ago, this time used steady, accurate groundstrokes and timely net play for the victory over No. 4 Kuznetsova, the 2004 US Open champion. "I had exactly the same feeling I had against Martina in 2002," Hantuchova said. "I just knew that I was going to enjoy myself out there." *AP*

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Trinity, Mobil-ICA cagebelles post 3 wins in row

TRINITY AND MOBIL-ICA STREAKED to their third straight victories in Division C while Demikk-A opened its title-retention bid on a high note by edging past University of the Philippines in the Mighty Filter Kings-MBT Women's Cup recently at the RTU gym in Mandaluyong.

Mentored by Hayde Ong, the three-time champion Demikk-A nipped UP of Eric Castro, 33-32, at the start of Division A contest in the event presented by Mighty Filter and recognized as the country's biggest women's league.

Pulsating win

Also scoring big wins in the group were Far Eastern University, which scored a pulsating 51-50 win over last year's UAAP champion University of Santo Tomas, and Team 5th Avenue which pulled off a 59-52 decision over Atleta-Milo Best team.

Trinity opened its title campaign with a 64-53 win over Parañaque and followed it up with victories over Lynx, 60-49, and Cavite State University, 55-37.

Not to be outdone, Mobil-ICA also triumphed over UA&P Flashback, 48-37; CSU, 39-34; and Lynx, 47-35. The event is also backed by Apo Floors and Molten.

Philippine College of Criminology showed the way in Division B by beating CSB Atleta, 64-55, and Demikk-B, 70-42. Urban and CEU Kings also hurdled their opening-game assignments in the group.

The majority of alumni of various colleges and universities, especially in the UAAP, make up the teams in the tournament which has Nilo Fernandez as commissioner.

Make
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Koreans lead qualifiers

RANGED AGAINST WELL-TRAINED Koreans, reigning titlist Jan Tambogon still secured his place in the Class A cast by placing fourth out of eight qualifiers in the Eagle Ridge club championship recently in Gen. Trias, Cavite.

The 19-year-old Tambogon, playing out of Club Marinduque, carded a 78 at the Aoki course to emerge as No. 4 seed behind Koreans Koo Dong Hwan, Koo Jae Min and Son Jang Hyuk.

Koo Doong Hwan clinched the top seeding with a 73, followed by Koo Jae Min (74) and Son (77).

Tambogon meets No. 5 seed Fujio Goto (80) in the quarterfinals on Saturday in a replay of last year's final. Hwan meets No. 8 Kim Hyun Su (83), Min battles Hector Miole (81), and Son tackles Raphael Juan (80).

Korean Young Kim Yoon led the ladies' qualifying with a 71, followed by Park Ha Ye Jin (81), Nila Patricio (84), Sodami Son (96), Shonylita Alis (91), So Jung Hong (91), Park Hyun Sook (96) and Lee Sung Shin (96).

Don Bosco, USC dispute Cebu Cherifer cage title

CEBU CITY—DON BOSCO COLLEGE and University of San Carlos-North Campus ousted separate rivals in contrasting fashion Saturday to set-up a championship showdown in the Visayas leg of the 2007 Cherifer Tangkad Sagad Basketball Tournament at the Don Bosco Technology School in Barangay Punta Princesa here.

Marlo Pono scored five points in Don Bosco's heart-stopping 17-15 victory over Sacred Heart School, and Rey Arnejo hit seven markers as the USC North Campus routed Don Bosco Lawaan 28-8 in the pair of semifinal games.

The Bosconians of coach Rey Villagracia will dispute the Visayas trophy of the boys' 12-under 5-on-5 hoopfest supported by Adidas against the Galimar Largo-mentored USC North Campus squad.

Don Bosco College, USC North Campus, Sacred Heart School and Don Bosco Lawaan bested 20 other institutions to top their groups in the round-robin preliminary stage and gain their respective final four slots.

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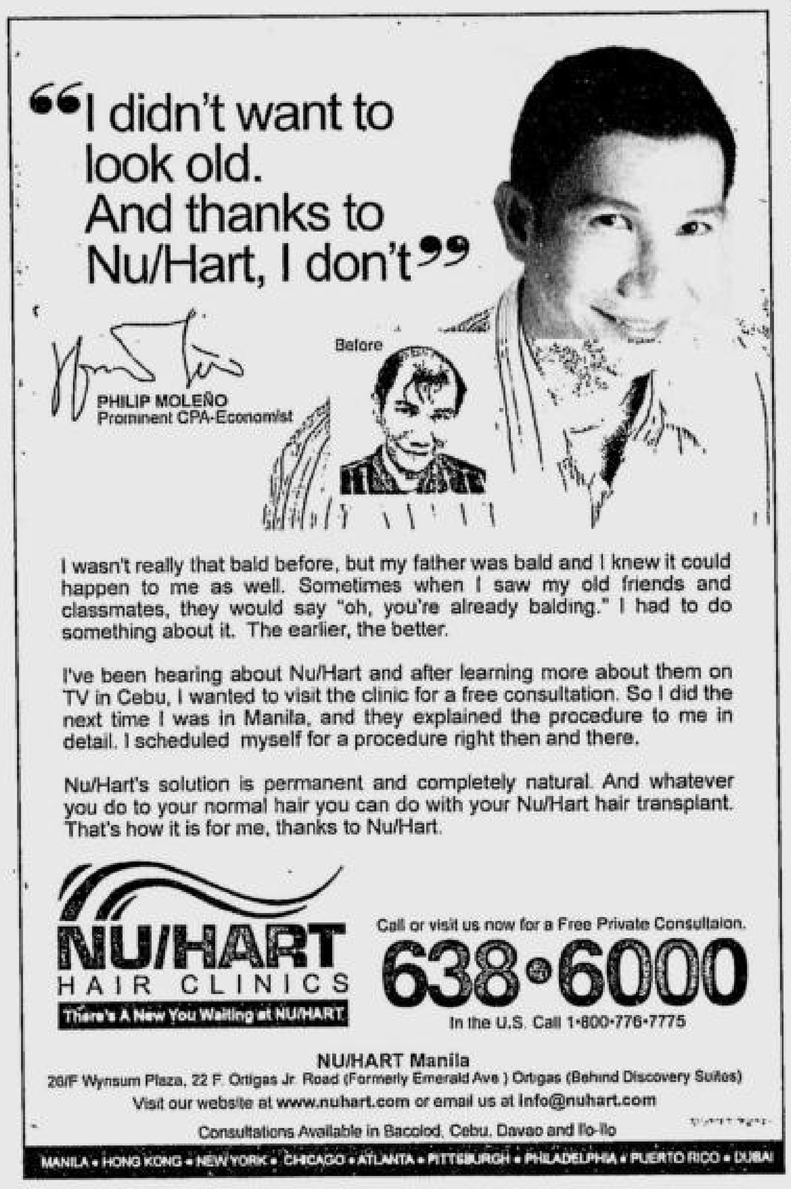

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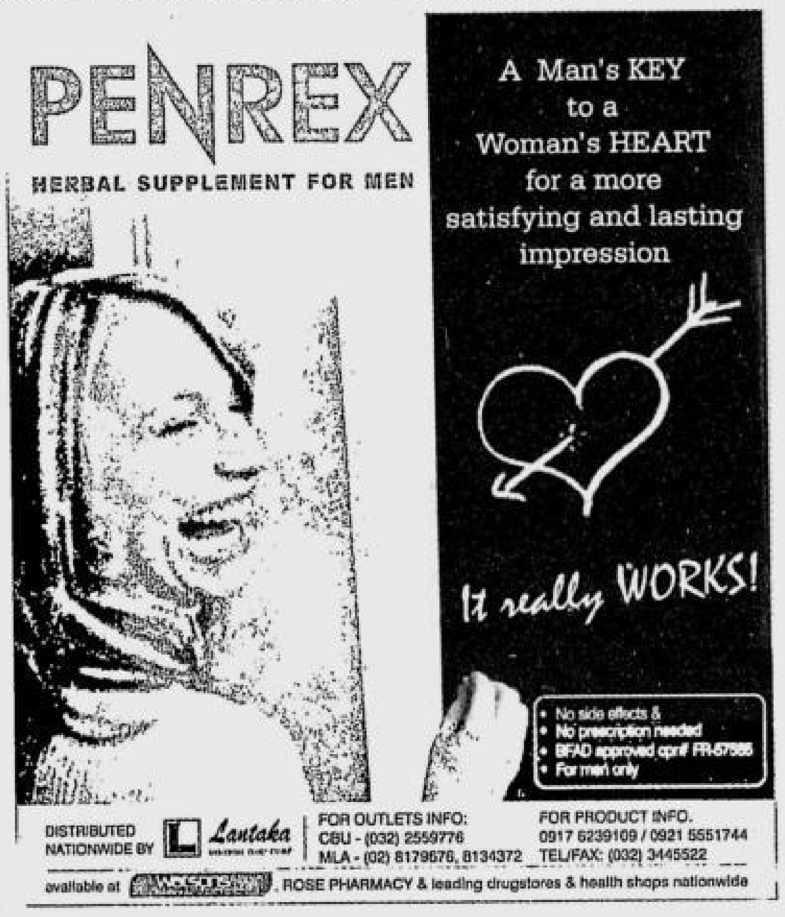

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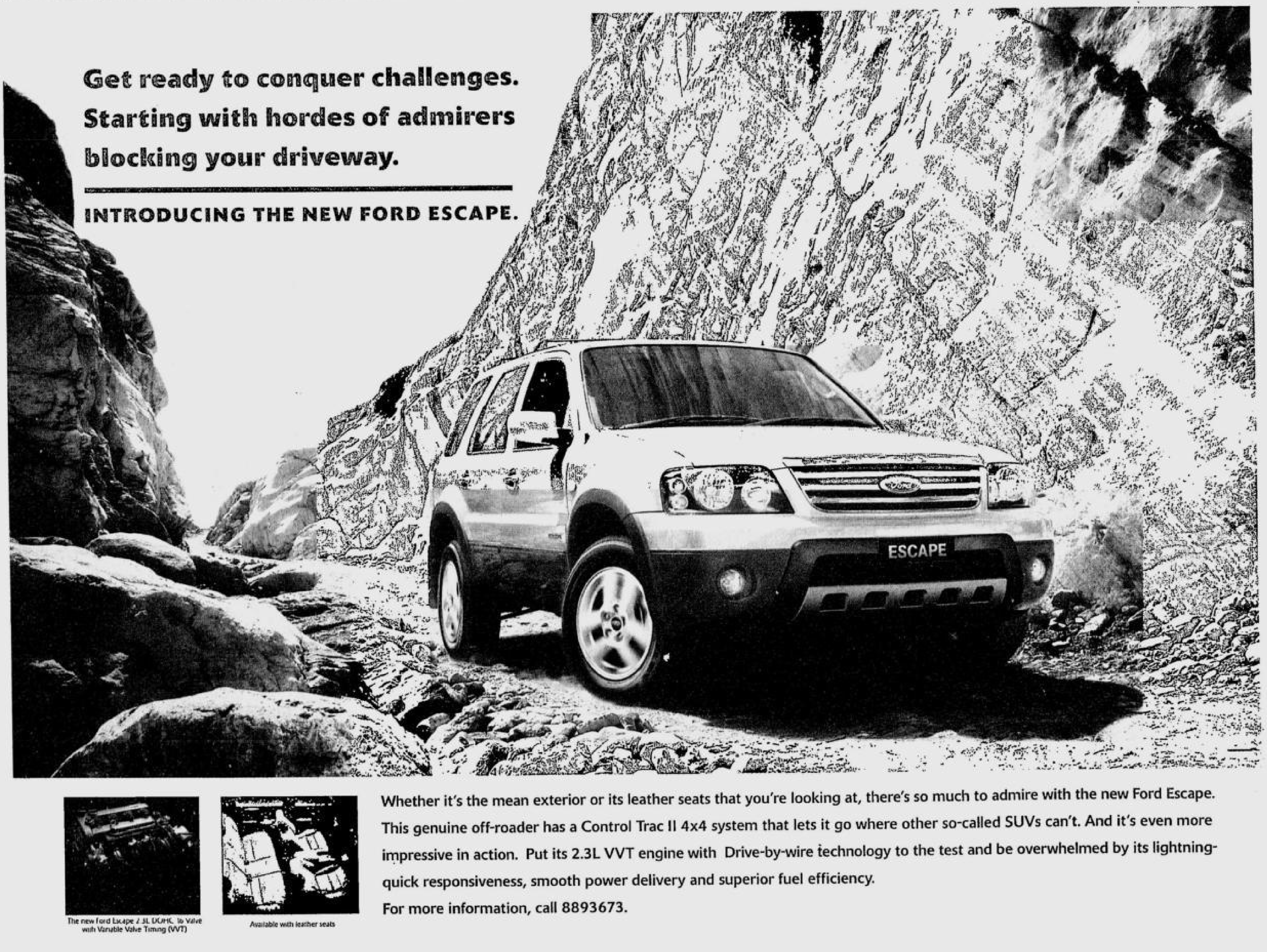

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Manila Water to cut rates on strong peso

16 centavos/cubic meter reduction starts in April

By Daxim L. Lucas

RESIDENTS COVERED BY METRO MANILA'S EAST ZONE water concession will enjoy lower water rates starting next month due to the strengthening of the peso against the dollar.

Ayala-owned Manila Water Co. Inc. said it would implement lower water rates starting April 1 "due to the continuing improvement of the peso versus other currencies and the proper management of borrowings by the company to fund its expansion projects."

The company's foreign currency differential adjustment (FCDA) component of the water bill will be reduced to P0.12 per cubic meter from P0.28, or by P0.16 per cubic meter. The FCDA is based on an exchange rate of P48.38 to a dollar.

This translates to a reduction of P3 in the monthly bills for "non-sewered" residential customers consuming 30 cubic meters a month.

The new FCDA was approved by the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS) regulatory office and confirmed by the MWSS board last Friday.

FCDA is a tariff mechanism that is adjusted upward to recover losses if the peso depreciates and downward if the peso appreciates against other currencies.

Manila Water pays for foreign exchange-denominated concession fees to the MWSS, as well as loans required for its service expansion and improvement.

Manila Water, whose shares are listed on the Philippine Stock Exchange (PSE),

MANILA/B2

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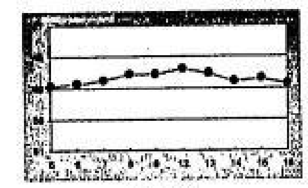

MARCH

PESO-DOLLAR RATE

P48.85 = $1

As of 5 p.m., March 16, 2007

Lackluster trading seen

THE LOCAL STOCK MARKET WOULD LIKELY try to sustain its upward trek this week as both investors and punters position themselves for the expected quarter-end buying activities.

AB Capital Securities Inc. said trading on the Philippine Stock Exchange (PSE) would also be dictated by developments in the global equities market scene.

"Looking ahead, we would not be surprised to see an upward bias toward the end

LACKLUSTER/B2

US firm moving operations to RP

By Ronnel W. Domingo

A NASDAQ-LISTED FIRM ANnounced plans of moving yet again another part of its operations to the Philippines amid American firms' expression of confidence in the country despite general misgivings among foreign investors.

Littelfuse Inc., which is based in Des Plaines, Illinois, said in a statement dated March 15 that it would transfer its manufacturing operations for electronics products from the Chicago area to existing facilities in the Philippines.

At the same time, Littelfuse is also transferring its manufacturing operations for automotive products to an existing plant in Mexico.

A maker of electronic fuses and accessories and related products, affiliate Littelfuse Philippines Inc. maintains a plant at the Lima Technology Park in Batangas.

The company has been registered

US FIRM/B2

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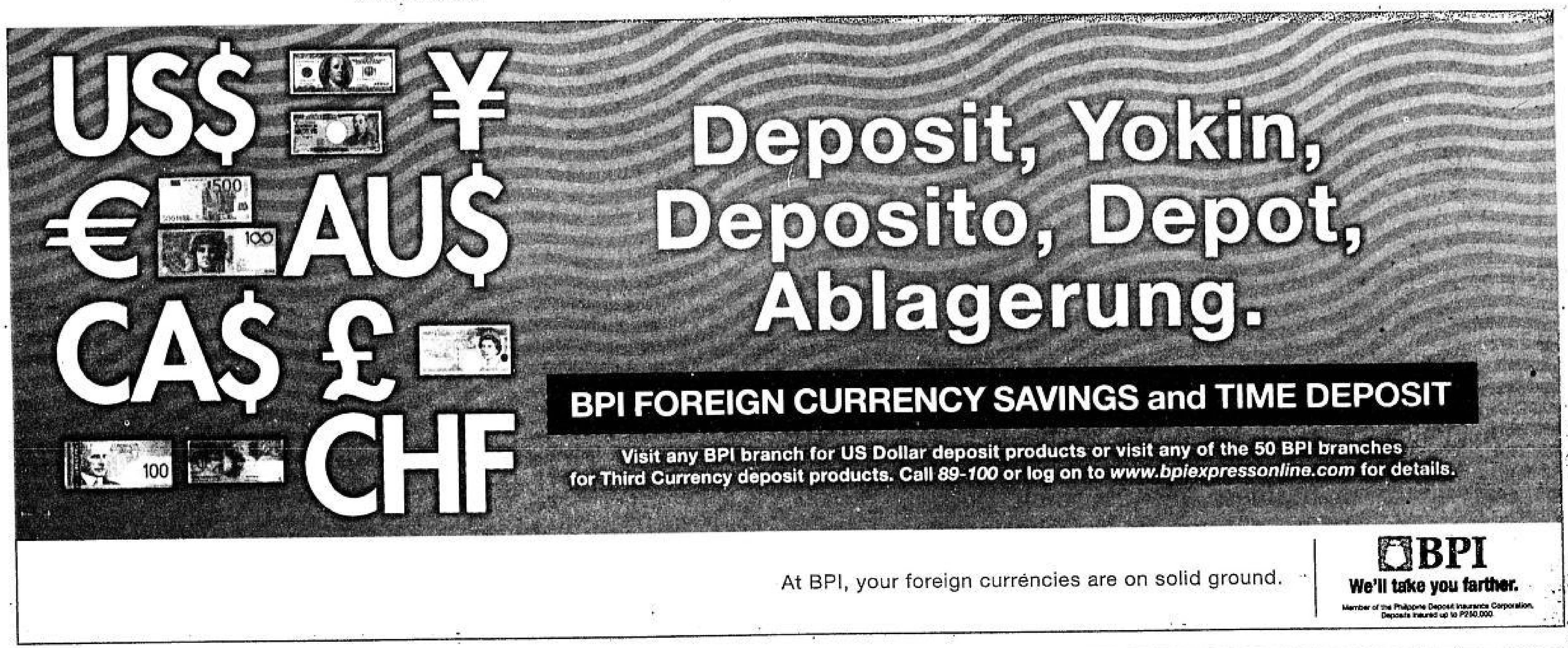
- **Project funding** for Galoc oil field completed /B4
- **BSP warns 24 banks** over bond price-fixing /B8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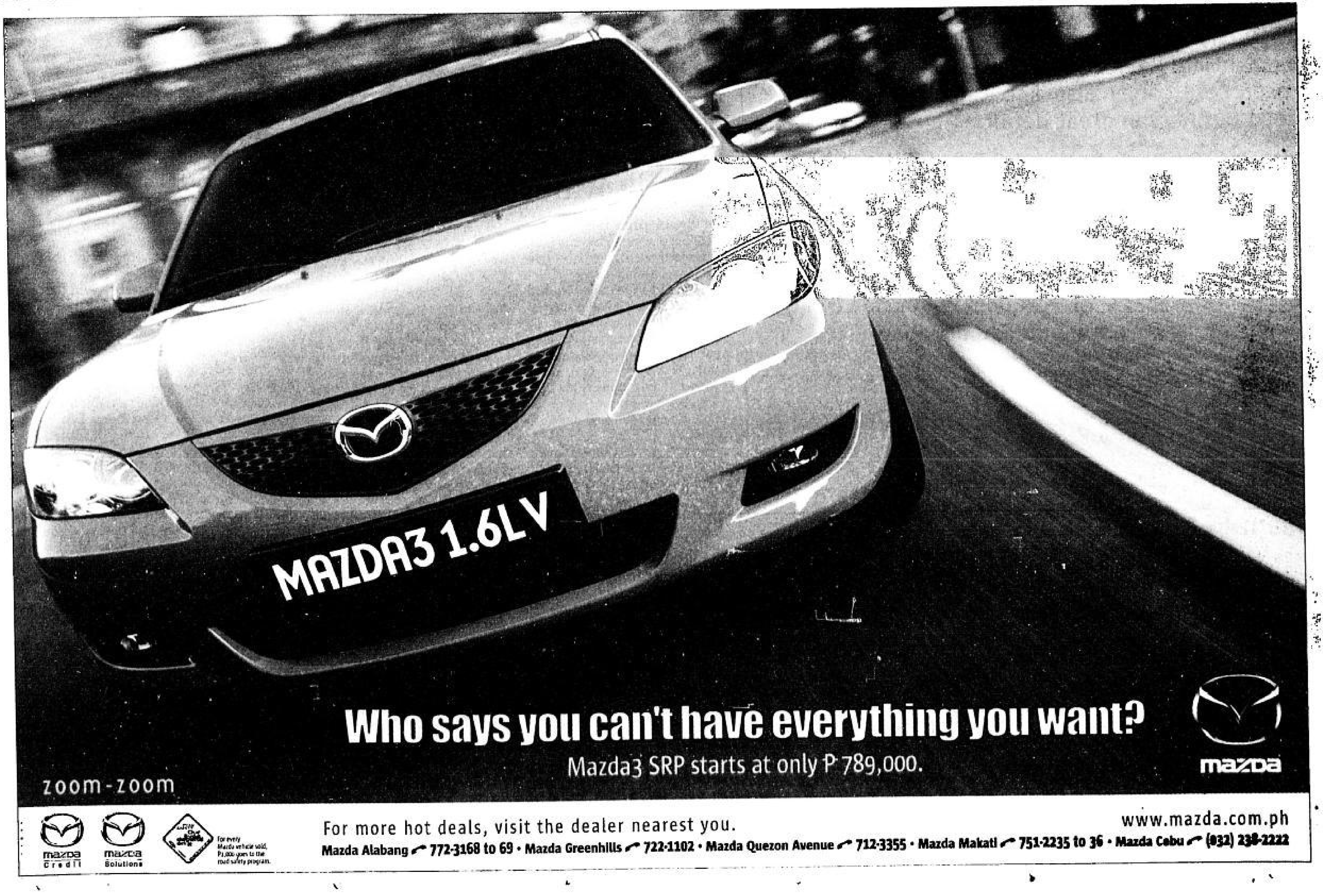
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Cebu Pacific to fly daily to Taiwan

By Daxim L. Lucas

BUDGET CARRIER Cebu Pacific Air Inc will start regular flights to Taiwan in the second quarter of this year as part of its aggressive route expansion in the region.

According to an airline industry source, Cebu Pacific will fly to Taiwan daily, matching the present schedule of rival Philippine Airlines.

"Cebu Pacific will use mid-day slots," said the source, who is familiar with the plans for the new route. "This means better schedules for passengers."

The Gokongwei-owned airline will use either its new Airbus A319 or A320 aircraft—similar types of slightly different capacities—for the service, depending on the expected load factor for each flight.

Cebu Pacific would start marketing the new flight this week to build sufficient bookings for its maiden flight, he added.

Earlier, the airline announced plans to expand its fleet further with the purchase of up to an additional 20 Airbus A320 aircraft worth $1.3 billion.

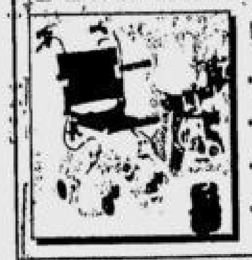
Cebu Pacific recently completed its $670-million refleeting program earlier this month.

"The (new) order is made up of 10 firm orders, with five options and an additional five options if the first five options are taken. We expect the firm orders to be delivered from 2010-2012 and the options from 2011-2013. This will allow us to grow our fleet from 14 Airbus aircraft to 32 Airbus aircraft by 2013," Cebu Pacific president and CEO Lance Gokongwei said in a statement.

"With this fleet expansion, we will be more than doubling our capacity. This means that we will be able to provide more low fares both in the domestic and international routes we operate in as well as spreading our wings to new destinations," Gokongwei added.

Cebu Pacific operates in 20 domestic and seven regional destinations using 10 A319s and four A320s, with a fleet age of less than one year.

Over the last few months, Cebu Pacific has added Singapore, Kuala Lumpur, Bangkok and Jakarta to its route network as well as expanding its service to Hong Kong and Korea, in line with its fleet expansion.



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Where are the jobs coming from?

NO FREE LUNCH

Cielito F. Habito

MY ARTICLE ON THE SOURCES OF OUR current economic growth ("Where is our growth coming from?") two weeks ago apparently drew much interest from readers that it calls for a sequel.

The release of the latest employment figures last week makes it quite timely to ask the logical next question. The data have come across as generally good news, with the overall unemployment rate reported to have dropped slightly to 7.8 percent in January 2007 from the 8.1 percent posted in the same month last year. Last year, the jobs situation generally worsened from the previous year, despite a 5.4-percent growth in GDP. Full-year average unemployment rate was 7.9 percent, higher than the previous year's 7.7 percent. Given the latest data, is the jobs situation finally turning up indeed?

More jobless

I hate to disappoint, but somewhere near the bottom of the summary report released by National Statistics Office Administrator Bobby Ericta is a very important but largely overlooked statement: "The unemployment rate recorded in January 2007, which is 7.8 percent, is not significantly different (from) last year's estimate of 8.1 percent." Statisticians know what it means when they say that the difference between two numbers is not statistically significant. For the rest of us, what this means is that the latest unemployment rate could have just as well been a higher 8.4 percent, and it wouldn't have been significantly different from last year's 8.1 percent either.

And this moved me to look more closely at the job numbers just released. It is perhaps more illuminating to look at the absolute numbers, rather than the percentages. And here is where the news turns not-too-rosy: the number of jobless workers actually rose from 2.837 million last year, to 2.85 million this year. That is, there were 13,000 more jobless people this year compared to a year ago. The picture is even worse for underemployment, i.e. those who have jobs but need more work. Underemployed workers rose from 6.774 million in January 2006 to 7.216 million in January 2007, or an increase of 442,000 workers, mostly coming from the farm sector.

Behind the treadmill

In short, we continue to fall behind on the jobs-growth treadmill. It is initially gratifying to see that the growing economy generated 1.515 million net new jobs over the past year. This is more than twice the 750,000 new jobs generated from January 2005 to January 2006. That is genuinely good news.

The problem though, is that the number of new entrants to the labor force grew by 1.528 million, or still 13,000 more than the new jobs—hence the increase in the jobless count by that same amount. So, just as we thought we had managed to run much faster, the treadmill got even further ahead of us again.

Before the population control advocates among us get too excited, the treadmill got faster not because of a faster increase in the working-age population (i.e. 15 years old and above). It was more because there was a significant rise in the labor force participation rate from 63.6 to 64.8 percent. This means that an additional 1.2 percent of the working age population (numbering 56.1 million), or about 675,000 people, decided to enter the job market (translation: look for a job). Now depending on whether you like or dislike the government, you can put either a positive or a negative spin to that. The former might argue that the improving economy is inspiring more people to join the job market. The latter could say that harder times are forcing people who would otherwise not work to look for a job. Who's right? The statistics alone won't tell us, so I'll leave the judgment to you readers.

Sectoral composition

To further answer our main question, I studied more closely the sectoral breakdown of the jobs. And here lies more disturbing news. Of the 1.515 million new jobs created, 1.47 million or 97 percent were services sector jobs. The industry sector gained 96,000 jobs, but here's the challenge: agriculture actually lost 51,000 jobs. With the rural sector accounting for 70 percent of the country's poor, this must be of great concern.

Among the services sector jobs, the biggest chunk (482,000) came from wholesale and retail trade. These can range from jobs in giant shopping malls to street vendors. The numbers don't tell us how much is which, but instinct tells me it is more of the latter. The next biggest group (309,000) of new service jobs is tagged as "private household employment"—i.e. domestics like housekeepers, family drivers, gardeners and the like. Is this a good or bad thing? Again, one can spin it positively or negatively, and I will leave that to the judgment of the reader. Other major contributors, with over 100,000 new jobs each, are real estate and business services (presumably including BPOs), hotels and restaurants, public administration (i.e. government jobs), and a catch-all "other services."

There is no regional breakdown of the jobs, but Metro Manila is reported to have the highest jobless rate of 12.7 percent, while Cagayan Valley has the best job record with only 3.1-percent unemployment.

So, once again, where are the jobs coming from? One thing emerges from the numbers: it is too early to celebrate and let our guard down, as they are not coming enough from where they are needed most.

Comments are welcome at chabito@ateneo.edu

US firm moving operations to RP

From page B1

with the Philippine Economic Zone Authority since July 2000.

"(This) announcement is consistent with other decisions we have made to simplify our business and relocate manufacturing to lower-cost areas that are closer to our customers," said Gordon Hunter, company chief executive.

Hunter said the phased transition was expected to be completed by 2009 and would generate some $10 million in yearly savings although the firm would spend a total of about $9.5 million for the move.

He said the relocations would halve the company's workforce in the Chicago-area facilities to some 300 people, which was "the most difficult part of the decision."

"We plan to maintain our corporate offices in the Chicago area and invest in a technology center to further our leadership in circuit protection," Hunter said.

In 2005, Littelfuse had also announced a decision to move its thin film fuse manufacturing from Des Plaines to the Philippines.

The firm also has sales, distribution, manufacturing and engineering facilities in Brazil, China, England, Germany, Hong Kong, India, Ireland, Japan, Korea, the Netherlands, Singapore and Taiwan.

According to the company's profile, it focuses on developing and manufacturing devices that protect electronic circuits and applications from harm caused by overcurrent and overvoltage events.

Littelfuse products are "vital components in virtually every product" that uses electricity, including automobiles, computers, consumer electronics, handheld devices, industrial equipment, and telecom/datacom circuits.

Manila Water . . .

From page B1

said it was nearing completion of its P2-billion Antipolo water supply project, which will benefit an additional one million people.

At the same time, the firm will continue to implement its aggressive service expansion programs to reach the fringe areas of Taguig, Antipolo, San Mateo, Rodriguez, Cainta, Taytay and Angono.

Water supply projects have already started in the towns of Baras, Binangonan and Jalajala, all in Rizal.

Further service improvement and rehabilitation projects are also being undertaken in areas with 100-percent water coverage, which include the southeastern part of Quezon City, Mandaluyong City, San Juan, Marikina City, Pasig City, Pateros, the San Andres and Sta. Ana areas of Manila and the portion of Makati City east of the South Super Highway.

To help protect and preserve the environment, Manila Water said it was also expanding its wastewater operations and sanitation services all over the east concession area and was now building septic treatment plants in San Mateo, Rizal, Pinugay in Antipolo and Food Terminal Complex in Taguig.

Lackluster . . .

From page B1

of the month due to the seasonal window-dressing activities at the end of each quarter," the online broker said in a note to its clients.

The PSE index closed last week's trading at 3,062.25 points, representing a 1.21-percent decline from the previous week's close of 3,099.82 points.

More alarmingly, however, was the continued decline in average daily volumes, which indicated either decreasing interest in equities trading or the start of a prolonged consolidation period.

The average daily value turnover last week stood at only P3.06 billion a day. This was a 36.2-percent decline from the previous week's average of P4.8 billion.

For the coming week, AB Capital said local traders would continue to look abroad for cues.

"In the shorter term, we expect sentiments to be dictated still by global sentiments," it said.

For the most part, the firm saw no reason for the PSE index to make a significant deviation away from present range-bound trading, adding "short trading range is expected to be between 3,000 (initial support) and 3,100 (resistance)."

AB Capital held out hope, however, for investors still in the market, pointing out that significant buying would come in every time the PSEi would approach its major support.

"Exclusive of PLDT's significant decline (as much as 5 percent from its low this week), the market seems to show signs of stability," it said. "This is reflected by the strong recovery each time it falls close to the 3,000 level."

Blue chip issues will continue to receive the brunt of selling pressure, while second-line stocks will also test their technical support levels.

"Third liners' will receive much of the attention for the rest of the month," the broker predicted, referring to the highly speculative shares of mining and oil exploration firms. *Daxim L. Lucas*

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Pag-IBIG sees P9.1-B profit this year

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE STATE-CONTROLLED Home Development Mutual Fund, popularly known as the Pag-IBIG Fund, expects net profit to rise by about 18 percent to P9.1 billion this year from P7.7 billion last year.

In an interview, Pag-IBIG Fund president Romero Quimbo said the fund had seen a boom in the property sector since 2003, further supported by the slowdown in interest rates that allowed Pag-IBIG to increase housing funds by 35 percent each year over the last few years.

He said Pag-IBIG was so far the most profitable tax-paying government-controlled corporation, contributing P2 billion to the state coffers in 2006.

This year, he said its loan portfolio would likely hit the P25-billion mark, expanding from P18 billion last year and from P3.8 billion in 2001.

"We have not changed our underwriting. Our loans are more accessible today not because we've put down our guard and set aside proper credit investigation," Quimbo explained. "They are more accessible because interest rates are much lower. Loans are now more affordable."

From an annual rate of 16 percent during the 1998-99 period or right after the Asian currency crisis, Pag-IBIG now charges only 7 percent for a P500,000 loan and 6 percent for loans of P300,000 and below.

"In terms of amortization, for a P500,000 loan under old rates, it should be P4,900-P5,000 a month. It's now down to P3,700," he said.

He said the Pag-IBIG was continuing to serve the niche market that banks do not serve, the low-cost housing sector.

As part of its reforms, he said the mutual fund was voluntarily migrating to international ac-

PAG-IBIG/B11

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METROBANK
Investment Fund Performance
(as of March 14, 2007)

Investment Funds	Fund Classification	Net Yield		
		Past 90 Days*	Year On Year	Full Year 2006
PESO FUNDS				
Metrofund Starter	Money Market	1.13%	8.21%	10.80%
Metrofund Elite	Bond-Intermediate Term	1.00%	9.60%	13.70%
Metrofund Peak Earner	Bond-Medium Term	0.64%	9.35%	13.74%
Metro Invest Plus	Bond-Intermediate Term	0.81%	9.45%	12.69%
Metro Capital Growth Fund	Balanced Fund	7.07%	38.08%	41.24%
DOLLAR FUNDS				
Metrodollar Phil. Liquid Fund	Bond-Intermediate Term	1.07%	6.32%	7.06%
Metrodollar Phil. Bond Fund	Bond-Medium Term	1.18%	8.49%	9.69%
Metro Dollar Asian Bond Fund	Bond-Medium Term	1.56%	6.14%	4.27%

*Absolute Yield
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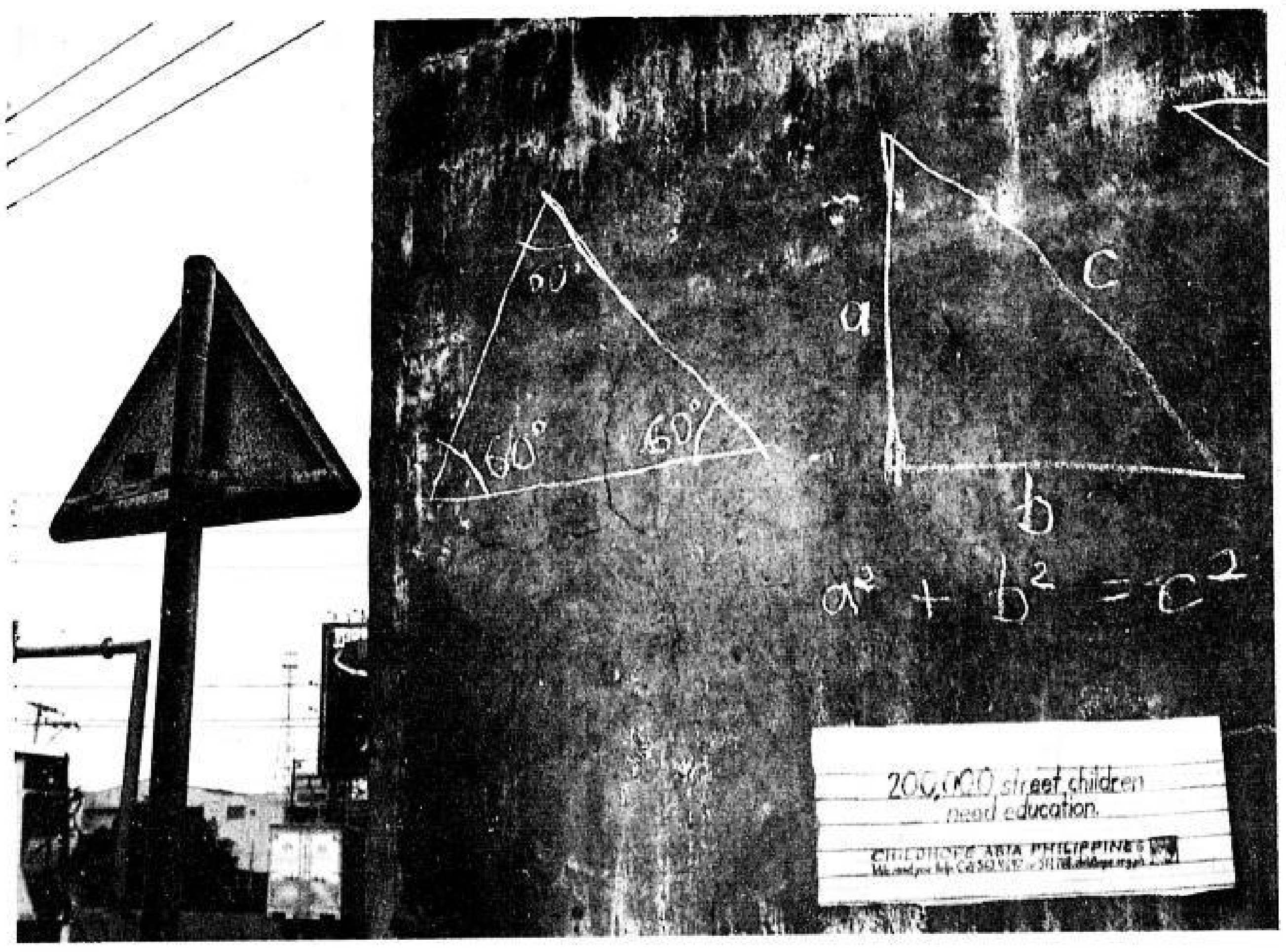
"Participation in the Fund is not a deposit and not covered by PDIC. The fund is not capital protected and any income/loss arising from market fluctuations is for the account of the investor. Historical performance is not a guarantee of similar future results."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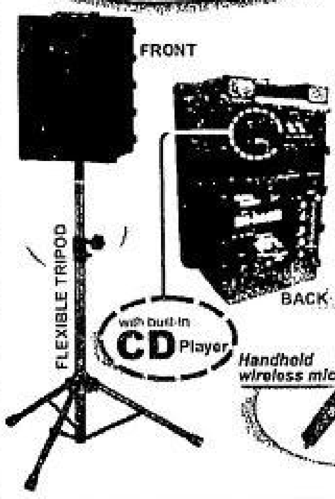

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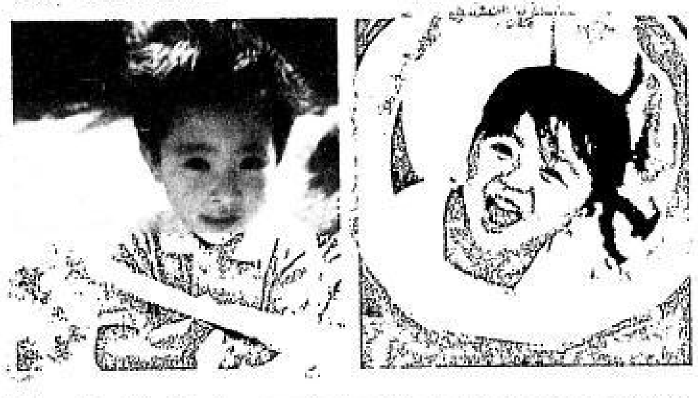

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(As of March 16, 2007)

STOCKS	OPEN	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE	VOLUME
BANKS					
Asiatrust Dev. Bank Inc.	10.5	10.75	10.5	10.5	93,500
Banco de Oro Univ. Bank	56	57.5	56	57	682,000
Bank of the Phil. Islands	64.5	66.5	64.5	64.5	619,400
Citystate Savings Bank	20	20	20	20	500
Export and Ind. Bank A	0.5	0.52	0.5	0.52	5,610,000
Equitable PCI Bank Inc.	100	100	100	100	19,400
Metropolitan Bank & Trust	59	59	58	58	748,200
Philippine National Bank	47	47	46.5	46.5	35,800
Phil. Savings Bank	61	63	61	63	2,500
Security Bank Corp.	74.5	74.5	74.5	74.5	2,000
Union Bank of the Phil.	58	58	57.5	57.5	136,500
OTHER FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS					
Bankard Inc.	0.65	0.65	0.65	0.65	100,000
Citisaconline Com Inc.	6.4	6.4	6.3	6.3	246,000
Pilipino Fund Inc.	5.1	5.1	5.1	5.1	3,000
Manulife Financial Corp.	1580	1580	1580	1580	500
PCI Leasing & Fin. Inc.	1.84	1.84	1.84	1.84	106,000
Phil. Stock Exchange Inc.	675	675	630	635	6,640
Sun Life Financial Inc.	2100	2100	2090	2090	1,220
Ivantage Corp.	1.54	1.54	1.52	1.52	601,000
ELECTRICITY, ENERGY, POWER & WATER					
Pnoc Energy Dev. Corp.	5.8	5.8	5.7	5.7	16,653,000
First Gen Corp.	52.5	52.5	52.5	52.5	15,000
First Phil Hldgs Corp.	70.5	70.5	70	70	20,300
Manila Electric Co. A	69.5	69.5	69	69.5	67,200
Manila Electric Co. B	69.5	69.5	69	69	197,700
Manila Water Co. Inc.	8.9	9	8.9	8.9	2,699,000
Petron Corp.	4.4	4.4	4.3	4.3	3,943,000
East Asia Power Res. Corp.	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.25	2,420,000
Salcon Power Corp.	1.88	1.88	1.88	1.88	2,000
Trans-Asia Oil and Energy	1.34	1.36	1.34	1.36	616,000
FOOD, BEVERAGE & TOBACCO					
Alaska Milk Corp.	3.55	3.7	3.55	3.7	28,000
Ginebra San Miguel Inc.	25.5	25.5	25.5	25.5	12,300
Jollibee Foods Corp.	52.5	53	52.5	52.5	107,000
RFM Corp.	1.24	1.24	1.24	1.24	215,000
Roxas Holdings Inc.	2.55	2.55	2.55	2.55	203,000
San Miguel Corp. A	62	62.5	61.5	62.5	96,500
San Miguel Corp. B	71.5	73	71.5	72	65,800
Alliance Tuna Int'l. Inc.	2.34	2.34	2.26	2.26	6,575,000
Universal Robina Corp.	17.75	17.75	17.5	17.5	363,200
CONSTRUCTION, INFRASTRUCTURE & ALLIED SERVICES					
Southeast Asian Cement	1.7	1.7	1.66	1.66	4,705,000
Engineering Equip. Inc.	4.45	4.5	4.4	4.5	1,500,000
Fortune Cement Corp.	3.25	3.25	3.25	3.25	1,000
Holcim Philippines Inc.	6.7	6.7	6.7	6.7	3,059,000
Republic Cement Corp.	5.8	5.9	5.8	5.8	139,000
CHEMICALS					
Chemrez Technologies Inc.	4.9	4.9	4.8	4.85	396,000
Metro Alliance Hldgs B	0.52	0.52	0.52	0.52	60,000
DIVERSIFIED INDUSTRIALS					
Picop Resources Inc.	0.36	0.36	0.33	0.34	15,230,000
HOLDING FIRMS					
Abacus Con Res & Hdg A	0.011	0.011	0.011	0.011	62,900,000
Abacus Con Res & Hdg B	0.012	0.012	0.012	0.012	26,000,000
Ayala Corp.	565	580	560	565	63,340
Alsons Cons. Res. Inc.	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.7	40,000
Aboitiz Equity Ventures	8	8.1	8	8.1	411,000
Alliance Global Group Inc.	6.6	7	6.6	6.7	3,360,000
Ajo.Net Holdings Inc.	0.07	0.0775	0.07	0.0725	166,400,000
A. Soriano Corp.	3.25	3.25	3.25	3.25	72,000
APC Group Inc.	0.34	0.36	0.34	0.36	21,000,000
Alcorn Gold Res. Corp.	0.012	0.012	0.012	0.012	33,900,000
Anglo Phil Holdings Corp.	1.48	1.64	1.48	1.62	16,699,000
ATN Holdings Inc.	1.56	1.6	1.56	1.6	12,000
Pal Holdings Inc.	3.36	3.36	3.36	3.36	7,000
Balabac Resources & Hldgs	4.66	4.66	4.6	4.6	134,000
Bacnotan Cons Indus Inc.	9.8	9.8	9.8	9.8	117,000
Benpres Holdings Corp.	3.3	3.4	3.3	3.38	34,799,000
DMCI Holdings Inc.	6.8	6.8	6.7	6.8	825,000
Filinvest Dev. Corp.	4.96	4.96	4.9	4.9	429,000
Forum Pacific Inc.	0.29	0.3	0.29	0.3	230,000
J.G. Summit Holdings Inc.	12.75	12.75	12.5	12.5	609,000
Jollivile Holdings Corp.	1.58	1.6	1.58	1.6	108,000
Keppel Holdings B	2	2	2	2	10,000
Medco Holdings	0.34	0.34	0.33	0.33	310,000
Magnum Holdings Inc.	8	8.4	8	8.2	1,822,000
Multitech Inv. Corp.	1.72	1.74	1.66	1.66	167,000
Prime Orion Phils. Inc.	0.29	0.3	0.27	0.28	9,000,000
Solid Group Inc.	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.7	120,000
Sinophil Corp.	0.205	0.21	0.205	0.205	16,770,000
SM Investments Corp.	362.5	365	360	360	110,000
Wellex Industries Inc.	0.17	0.17	0.17	0.17	100,000
PROPERTY					
Ayala Land Inc.	16	16	15.75	15.75	836,300
Belle Corp.	1.34	1.38	1.34	1.38	6,271,000
A Brown Company Inc.	1.2	1.22	1.2	1.22	104,000
Cebu Holdings Inc.	3.86	3.86	3.7	3.7	6,353,000
C & P Homes Inc.	2.46	2.56	2.46	2.46	366,000
Cyber Bay Corp.	0.28	0.28	0.28	0.28	90,000
EIB Realty Developers Inc.	0.205	0.22	0.205	0.22	110,000
Empire East Land Inc.	0.77	0.77	0.76	0.76	5,680,000
Ever-Gotesco Resources	0.0725	0.0775	0.07	0.0775	41,900,000
Filinvest Land Inc.	1.66	1.66	1.64	1.66	14,800,000
Gotesco Land Inc.	0.26	0.27	0.26	0.27	1,940,000
Gotesco Land Inc.B	0.26	0.27	0.26	0.26	1,320,000
Interport Res.	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	13,000,000
Interport Res. B	0.011	0.011	0.011	0.011	12,000,000
Kuok Phil. Properties	0.47	0.47	0.47	0.47	1,150,000
Fil-Estate Land Inc.	0.81	0.82	0.81	0.81	2,020,000
Megaworld Corp.	3.05	3.05	3	3.05	9,685,000
Metro Pacific Inv. Corp.	4.45	4.5	4.4	4.45	136,000
MRC Allied Ind. Inc.	0.93	0.94	0.88	0.88	23,950,000
Robinsons Land Corp.	19	19	18.25	18.5	6,014,400
Phil Realty and Holdings	0.61	0.61	0.6	0.61	1,750,000
SM Development Corp.	3.85	3.85	3.85	3.85	850,000
SM Prime Holdings Inc.	11	11	10.75	11	3,364,000
Suntrust Home Dev. Inc.	0.68	0.7	0.68	0.7	610,000
Uniwide Holdings Inc.	0.18	0.205	0.18	0.205	112,330,000
MEDIA					
ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp.	24	24.75	24	24.75	340,300
TELECOMMUNICATIONS					
Digital Telecom Phils Inc.	1.76	1.76	1.7	1.7	5,301,000
Globe Telecom Inc.	1330	1375	1320	1350	25,400
Pilipino Tel. Corp.	6.6	6.7	6.6	6.6	1,786,000
Phil. Long Dis Tel Co.	2250	2285	2250	2285	114,830
INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY					
Boulevard Holdings Inc.	0.26	0.26	0.25	0.26	4,190,000
Diversified Fin. Network	3.8	3.8	3.7	3.7	57,000
Imperial Res.	0.021	0.021	0.021	0.021	2,000,000
Ionics Inc.	2.3	2.32	2.3	2.32	51,000
IPVG Corp.	5.6	6	5.6	5.9	3,029,000
Island Info and Tech Inc.	0.055	0.055	0.055	0.055	2,000,000
ISM Communications Corp.	0.06	0.0625	0.06	0.0625	10,800,000
Transpacific Broadband	2.18	2.2	2.18	2.18	51,000
Philweb Corp.	0.045	0.047	0.045	0.046	99,400,000
TRANSPORTATION SERVICES					
Asian Terminals Inc.	4.2	4.25	4.2	4.25	155,000
Aboitiz Trans. Sys. Corp.	1.38	1.38	1.38	1.38	52,000
Int'l Container Term'l Sv	28.5	29	28	29	1,494,900
Keppel Phils. Marine Inc.	1.08	1.2	1.08	1.16	635,000
Lorenzo Shipping Corp.	1.16	1.16	1.16	1.16	12,000
HOTEL & LEISURE					
Leisure & Resorts Corp.	3.3	3.6	3.25	3.6	5,133,000
Philippine Racing Club	3	3	3	3	11,000
Waterfront Phils. Inc.	0.92	0.95	0.92	0.93	1,470,000
EDUCATION					
iPeople Inc.	3.2	3.25	3.2	3.25	22,000
DIVERSIFIED SERVICES					
Macroasia Corp.	2.65	2.65	2.55	2.6	324,000
Paxys Inc.	25.5	25.5	25	25.5	417,600
MINING					
Apex Mining Co. Inc. A	4.95	5	4.95	5	682,000
Apex Mining Co. Inc. B	5	5.1	5	5.1	20,000
Abra Mining & Industrial	0.011	0.012	0.011	0.012	160,600,000
Atlas Cons. Min & Dev't	9.8	9.8	9.8	9.8	5,695,000
Benguet Corp. A	11	11	11	11	80,300
Dizon Copper Silver Mines	2.6	2.6	2.6	2.6	1,000
Geograce Res. Phil. Inc.	1.4	1.44	1.38	1.42	93,273,000
Lepanto Cons Mng. Co. A	0.28	0.28	0.28	0.28	2,300,000
Lepanto Cons. Mng. Co. B	0.33	0.33	0.33	0.33	200,000
Manila Mining Corp. A	0.027	0.028	0.027	0.027	37,500,000
Manila Mining Corp. B	0.032	0.033	0.031	0.033	159,500,000
Omico Corp.	0.019	0.019	0.018	0.019	1,083,400,000
Philex Mining Corp.	4.3	4.3	4.25	4.25	6,579,000
Semirara Mining Corp.	19.5	20	19.5	20	541,700
United Paragon Mining Co.	0.71	0.74	0.7	0.74	1,900,000
Vulcan Ind'l	1.16	1.26	1.16	1.24	17,886,000
OIL					
Basic Petroleum Corp.	0.46	0.5	0.46	0.46	49,690,000
Oriental Pet. & Min. A	0.013	0.013	0.013	0.013	59,600,000
Oriental Pet. & Min. B	0.014	0.014	0.014	0.014	63,800,000
The Philodrill Corp.	0.012	0.012	0.012	0.012	167,800,000

CURRENCIES

March 16, 2007 Country	Unit	Euro Equivalent	Dollar Equivalent	Peso Equivalent
United States	Dollar	0.755468	1.000000	48.6450
Japan	Yen	0.006428	0.008508	0.4138
United Kingdom	Pound	1.463323	1.937000	94.2264
Hong Kong	Dollar	0.096716	0.128023	6.2277
Switzerland	Franc	0.620499	0.821355	39.9548
Canada	Dollar	0.642178	0.850051	41.3507
Singapore	Dollar	0.492829	0.652358	31.7340
Australia	Dollar	0.595599	0.788395	38.3515
Bahrain	Dinar*	2.004027	2.652731	129.0421
Saudi Arabia	Rial	0.201531	0.266766	12.9768
Brunei	Dollar	0.491227	0.650237	31.6308
Indonesia	Rupiah	0.000082	0.000108	0.0053
Thailand	Baht	0.023032	0.030488	1.4831
UAE	Dirham	0.205746	0.272346	13.2483
Euro	Euro	1.000000	1.323700	64.3914
Korea	Won	0.000800	0.001059	0.0515
China	Yuan**	0.097554	0.129132	6.2816
Argentina	Peso	0.244090	0.323102	15.7173
Brazil	Real	0.361636	0.478698	23.2863
Denmark	Kroner	0.134234	0.177688	8.6435
India	Rupee	0.017136	0.022686	1.1036
Malaysia	Ringgit	0.215139	0.284779	13.8531
Mexico	New Peso	0.067769	0.089706	4.3637
New Zealand	Dollar	0.525134	0.695120	33.8141
Norway	Kroner	0.123041	0.162869	7.9228
Pakistan	Rupee	0.012445	0.016474	0.8014
South Africa	Rand	0.102365	0.135501	6.5914
Sweden	Kroner	0.108036	0.143010	6.9567
Syria	Pound	0.014563	0.019264	0.9371
Taiwan	Nt Dollar	0.022876	0.030281	1.4730
Venezuela	Bolivar	0.000352	0.000466	0.0227

Source: Reuters' forex closing prices as of NY Time—March 16, 2007

* Various banks in Bahrain as quoted in Reuters' Screen. ** Asian time closing rate as of March 16, 2007

Project funding for Galoc oil field completed

By Abigail L. Ho

UNITED KINGDOM-BASED Granby Oil and Gas Plc. has closed project financing for its $100-million share in the development of the Galoc oil field in offshore northwest Palawan.

The company, which has a 9.14-percent indirect interest in the Galoc field through its 15.69-percent shareholding in service contract operator Galoc Production Co. (GPC), has obtained all the necessary approvals from its co-venturers to close the deal.

Oil is expected to be drawn from the field by the first quarter of next year. Oil production is initially set at 15,000 barrels a day, with the entire development expected to yield up to 16 million barrels.

Apart from Granby, through wholly owned subsidiary Team Oil Ltd., other GPC shareholders are Vitol GPC Investments SA (68.62 percent) and Cape Energy Philippines SA (15.94 percent).

Service Contract 14C, which covers the Galoc oil field, is 58.29-percent owned by GPC.

Other shareholders include Australia's Nido Petroleum Ltd. (22.28 percent) and Philippine companies Philodrill Corp. (6.4 percent), Oriental Petroleum and Minerals Corp. (4.97 percent), Linapacan Oil, Gas and Power (2.61 percent), Forum Energy (2.27 percent), Alcorn Gold Resources (1.53 percent), PetroEnergy Resources (1.03 percent), and Phoenix Energy (0.62 percent).

Nido Petroleum Philippines Pty. Ltd. had earlier said that drilling on the Galoc oil field would start by the third quarter, after having secured all the formal approvals and equipment contracts for the project.

In an earlier interview, Joanne Williams, deputy managing director of Nido Philippines' parent, Nido Petroleum Ltd., said the company would be investing $20 million this year for the development of the Galoc oil field.

According to Nido, the first development phase for the Galoc oil field would require an investment of $86 million, including a 12.5-percent contingency, on behalf of the SC 14 joint venture.

With Nido's 22.28-percent working interest in the field, its share in the development cost should amount to about $19.2 million.

International energy consulting firm Gaffney, Cline and Associates (GCA), through a reserves certification program, confirmed that the Galoc oil field had 9.7 million barrels of proven oil reserves.

According to the same test, GCA determined that there were 23.5 million barrels of proven and probable reserves in the oil field.

Online gaming firm raising ₱370M via public offering

By Daxim L. Lucas

THE PHILIPPINE Stock Exchange has approved the application of Belle Corp.'s online gaming unit to raise funds through an initial public offering.

In a circular sent to member brokers, the PSE said it had approved the listing of 191 million common shares of Pacific Online Systems Corp. Of this, 39.8 million shares would be made available to the public through the IPO.

This is expected raise about P370.1 million based on the higher end of the offer price range of P8.50 to P9.30 per share.

At this price range, the firm said its shares would have a price-earnings ratio—the theoretical proportion of the firm's net income allocated to each share—of 9.5 to 10.4 times, based on its projected 2007 earnings.

The company has yet to disclose its intended use for the proceeds of the public offer.

Earlier, however, Belle vice chair Willy Ng Ocier said Pacific Online was planning to expand its presence in Visayas and Mindanao, primarily by setting up more terminals and lottery systems on behalf of the Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office, which is the company's main client.

According to the PSE, Pacific Online's equity sale would come largely from the company's shareholders, who would release 28 million of their own shares for the IPO. Another 11.8 million in primary shares will be added to the pie.

The shares will be offered only to the domestic market, mainly to institutional investors and the general public.

Pacific Online has tapped the services of Asian Alliance Investment Corp. and BDOP Capital & Investment Corp. to serve as its issue managers and underwriters.

TPBA

Information and Education Campaign

ADVISORY # 1

WHAT BIOFUELS CAN DO FOR US TODAY
BY MAY 2007, RA 9367 (BIOFUELS ACT)
MANDATES BIODIESEL BLENDING AT 1% (B1)

On **January 12, 2007** President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo signed RA 9367, the Biofuels Act, into law that mandates, after the required publication periods, coco-biodiesel use at 1% blend **(B1) within three months or by May 2007** and bioethanol at 5% **(E5) within two years or by January 2009.**

This sets into motion our country's initiative to immediately protect our people from harmful gasses, to fulfill our global commitments to mitigate air pollution and extinction-level climate change, reduce our dependence on imported fuel and to **increase rural incomes and employment** through the immediate use of our **"indigenous renewable and sustainably-sourced clean energy sources"** as a blend to all the fuels we use.

1. Immediate Mitigants to Air Pollution and Climate Change - The recent showing of former American Vice President Al Gore's "The Inconvenient Truth" drives home the horrific dangers of global climate change and the need to take urgent steps to mitigate it **TODAY**. This is on top of the health costs of runaway air pollution on our people now estimated to cost above $450 Million per year (DOH-WHO).

PNS-compliant Coco-Biodiesel, available now, is the only biodiesel in the world that lowers nitrogen oxides (NOx) that contribute to the greenhouse gases that cause climate change. It also reduces CO2 at the rate of 3 kilos for every liter of biodiesel used.

It is scientifically proven to lower diesel emissions by 30-60%. It is proven to be greatly beneficial to diesel engines and is accredited by the WorldWide Fuel Charter (WWFC 2004) for use up to 5% blend (B5) in diesel for all cars. The US now targets at least 20% biodiesel use by 2010 while many states have begun with a 2% mandate.

PNS-compliant Bioethanol, with plants now under development and to be available within two years, has likewise been shown to lower gasoline emissions significantly while boosting engine performance. The US now uses blends up to E85. The Philippine mandate is E5 within 2 years.

2. Immediate Relief for our Coconut Farmers, Public Utility Vehicles and our Commuting Public - Even as our coconut farmers, especially in Bicol, the Visayas and Southern Tagalog regions still reel from the devastating effects of typhoons and lahar, the stockpiling of coco-biodiesel to meet the May 2007 mandate has kept the prices of what remains of their produce at levels barely enough to help them survive today.

The 1% Filipino component of coco-biodiesel in B1 will pump approximately ₱4 Billion per year into our rural economies starting May 2007. Otherwise, this ₱4 Billion will go the way of the other 99% we have to pay for foreign imported oil. This money will support our rural economies. **TODAY**.

Public utility vehicles and commuters will benefit from much lower diesel emissions and the respiratory diseases they cause, from better combustion, lower maintenance costs and even higher mileage.

ALL SET FOR MAY 2007. Tanks have been set aside in nearby depots to service the coco-biodiesel needs in MetroManila and neighboring areas. Other depots will use splash blending and in-line metering techniques to blend requirements elsewhere in the country.

Thanks to **President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo**, **"Mr. Biofuels" Migs Zubiri**, our visionary **Congressmen** and **Senators** who supported it, and the **DOE** and **other Government Departments** and **Agencies** that helped in crafting and preparing RA 9367, the Philippines is now ready to meet the challenge of the times in energy use. Good for our motorists, better for our people.

Mabuhay ang Pilipinas! Mabuhay ang Pilipino!

YVONNE T. V. AGUSTIN
Executive Director
United Coconut Association of the Philippines

ALBERTO H. SUANSING
Chairman
Transport Organizations for Clean Air

DANILO M. CORONACION
President / CEO
CIIF Oil Mills Group

PERFECTO "JONIE" ITLIONG
President
FEJODAP Baguio - Benguet - La Union

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	SHARES AVAILABLE	
CLUB	SELLER	BUYER
Alabang Country Club A/B*	1,100,000/Pls. Call*	1,050,000
Alta Vista A/B*/Corp.**	-	300,000/Pls. Call*/475,000**
Baguio Country Club	600,000	-
Camp John Hay	330,000	-
Canlubang Golf	480,000	420,000
Canyon Woods	120,000	-
Capitol Hills	40,000	-
Cebu Country Club	Pls. Call	Pls. Call
Celebrity Sports	Pls. Call	-
City Sports Cebu	-	360,000
Club Filipino	90,000	-
Eagleridge A/B*/C**	170,000/Pls. Call*/Pls. Call**	140,000/200,000*
Eastridge A/B*	150,000*	-
Evercrest	65,000	-
Fairways & Bluewater	Pls. Call	Pls. Call
Forest Hills A/B*/C**	90,000/150,000*	120,000*
Luisita Golf B	Pls. Call	380,000
Manila Golf Corporate	Pls. Call	13,000,000
Manila Golf Individual	Pls. Call	11,600,000
Manila Polo	Pls. Call	2,800,000
Manila Southwoods A/B*	300,000/Pls. Call*	-
Makati Sports Club A	200,000	180,000
Manila Yacht Club Ind.	250,000	-
Metropolitan Club A/B*	160,000	-
Mimosa Ind./C2*/C3**	220,000	Pls. Call/550,000**
Mt. Malarayat A	190,000	-
Orchard A/B*/C**	150,000/Pls. Call*/350,000**	150,000
Punta Fuego	Pls. Call	Pls. Call
Quezon City Sports Club	Pls. Call	Pls. Call
Riviera Golf A/B*/C**	80,000/170,000*/250,000**	Pls. Call*
Rockwell Leisure Club	Pls. Call	200,000
Royale Tagaytay CC	65,000	-
Sherwood A/B*/C**	70,000/150,000**	100,000*
Splendido Taal	200,000	Pls. Call
Sta. Elena Golf A/B*	Pls. Call	-
Subic Golf	190,000	-
Summit Point A	280,000	-
The Palms Country Club	360,000	330,000
Country Club at Tagaytay Highlands	350,000	630,000
Tagaytay Highlands	700,000	Pls. Call
Tagaytay Midlands	Pls. Call	-
The Country Club	2,000,000	-
Tower Club A/B*	150,000/180,000*	160,000
Valley Golf	-	-
Valle Verde Ind.	100,000	-
Wack Wack Golf	Pls. Call	7,500,000

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CLUB	SELLER	BUYER
Alabang Country Club "A" (Filipino)	1,300,000	-
Alabang Country Club "B" (Foreigner)	1,300,000	1,100,000
Anvaya Cove Beach and Nature Club	Please Call	-
Baguio Country Club	600,000	540,000
Calatagan Golf Club "A"	40,000	-
Calatagan Golf Club "B"	60,000	50,000
Camp John Hay	330,000	300,000
Canlubang	450,000	420,000
Capitol Hills	40,000	20,000
Cebu Country Club	1,800,000	1,500,000
Celebrity Sports Club	100,000	90,000
Club Filipino	100,000	-
Eagleridge "A"/"B"/"C"	Please Call	-
Forest Hills "A"	90,000	75,000
Forest Hills "B"	150,000	-
Forest Hills "C"	200,000	-
Luisita Golf "A"	350,000	270,000
Makati Sports Club "A"	200,000	180,000
Makati Sports Club "B"	250,000	190,000
Manila Golf (Corporate)	-	13,000,000
Manila Golf (Individual)	-	11,600,000
Manila Polo	Please Call	2,700,000
Manila Southwoods "A"	320,000	-
Manila Southwoods "B"	750,000	650,000
Manila Yacht Club	250,000	-
Mimosa (Individual)	230,000	200,000
Mimosa (Corporate)	650,000	600,000
Mt. Malarayat Gold "A"	180,000	-
Mt. Malarayat Gold "C"	350,000	-
Orchard Golf Club "A"	170,000	150,000
Orchard Golf Club "B"	290,000	-
Orchard Golf Club "C"	400,000	-
Quezon City Sports Club	170,000	145,000
Spa & Lodge	700,000	-
Sta. Elena "A"	-	1,150,000
Sta. Elena "B"	-	1,800,000
Summit Point "A"	280,000	-
Tagaytay Country Club	300,000	-
Tagaytay Highlands	750,000	630,000
Tagaytay Midlands	730,000	620,000
Valle Verde (Individual)	100,000	-
Valley Golf	200,000	180,000
Wack-Wack Golf Club	-	7,300,000

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BAGUIO COUNTRY CLUB	590K	ALABANG A	PLS CALL
CANLUBANG GOLF CLUB	500K	BAGUIO COUNTRY CLUB	550K
CLUB PUNTA FUEGO	380K	CAMP JOHN HAY	270K
EAGLERIDGE B	250K	CANLUBANG GOLF	PLS CALL
EAGLERIDGE C	350K	CLUB FILIPINO	80K
MAKATI SPORTS "B"	200K	EAGLERIDGE A	PLS. CALL
MANILA POLO CLUB	PLS CALL	EASTRIDGE B	130K
MANILA SOUTHWOODS A	290K	FOREST HILLS B	150K
MANILA YACHT CLUB IND.	200K	MAKATI SPORTS	180K
METROCLUB A	140K	MANILA GOLF CORP.	PLS CALL
MIMOSA C-3	650K	MANILA GOLF IND	12.8M
MT MALARAYAT A	200K	MANILA POLO CLUB	2.750M
ORCHARD A	PLS. CALL	MANILA SOUTHWOODS B	650K
QUEZON CITY SPORTS	150K	ORCHARD A	150K
SPLENDIDO B	200K	ORCHARD B	250K
TAGAYTAY HIGHLANDS	650K	SHERWOOD B	100K
TAGAYTAY MIDLANDS	650K	SPA & LODGE	450K
THE PALMS IND.	450K	STA. ELENA A (URGENT)	1.5M
THE PALMS CORP.	1.1M	TAGAYTAY MIDLANDS	PLS CALL
WACK WACK	PLS. CALL	THE PALMS	350K
OTHERS	PLS CALL	WACK WACK	7.5M

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Veggie trading post a boon to Banahaw farmers

By Delfin T. Mallari Jr.
Inquirer Southern Luzon

SARIAYA, QUEZON—THE START OF OPERAtions here last Friday of the first centralized vegetable trading post in Southern Tagalog was cheered by Mt. Banahaw farmers, who have long dreamed of getting better prices for their vegetables.

Siding Juarez, a vegetable farmer from the village of Mamala Uno, located some 500 meters above sea level, said the farmers in the Mt. Banahaw area were all hoping for the success of the "Sentrong Pamilihan ng Produktong Pang-agrikultura ng Quezon" (SPPPQ) located in the village of Sampaloc Dos on Maharlika Highway.

"It is our only chance to get a good price for our farm produce and get out from the clutches of the middlemen. The sentrong pamilihan should offer better prices than the middlemen," Juarez told the INQUIRER in Filipino.

South Food Caravan

The opening of the central vegetable station, which was initiated by Quezon Rep. Proceso Alcala (2nd District) as part of his agricultural development program, coincided with the launch of the South Food Caravan 2007 project of the Department of Agriculture.

The caravan led by Agriculture Secretary Arthur Yap aims to showcase Southern Luzon as an alternative source of highland vegetables, like lettuce and cabbage.

"We want to ensure that adverse weather conditions in other traditional sources like Benguet will have no effect on the steady supply of vegetables to Metro Manila," Yap said in a briefing here.

AGRICULTURE Secretary Arthur Yap (left) and Quezon Rep.. Proceso Alcala (right) help Mt. Banahaw farmers harvest cabbage. DELFIN T. MALLARI JR./INQUIRER SOUTHERN LUZON

Alcala said the SPPPQ would not only serve the marketing needs of Mt. Banahaw farmers but would also attend to the farm produce from the other parts of Quezon province, Marinduque and the Bicol region.

"We have to maximize the strategic location of the SPPPQ, which the other vegetable trading stations do not enjoy," Alcala said.

Alcala made it clear, however, that the traditional "middlemen" would still be part of the market cycle.

"We can't just cast them aside. But they will no longer transact business with the farmers, only with the SPPPQ," the lawmaker explained.

Alcala said that because the traders will now have to deal with the professional marketing people, they will no longer be able to simply dictate their price.

The farmers, on the other hand, will be assured of higher market prices for vegetables, unlike before when they had to deal directly with the traders, many of whom preyed on their ignorance of market prices.

Alcala has tapped former Asia Brewery marketing chief for Southern Luzon, Ariel Mañalac, as administrator of the SPPPQ, which is owned by a farmers' cooperative formed by the lawmaker.

Direct sale

The farm produce will be paid in cash by the SPPPQ.

But Juarez complained that the farmers were still waiting for other forms of assistance from the national government.

"We don't know anything about any government assistance. It will be good if the national government can also help us," said the farmer.

He asked the national government to build more farm-to-market roads and water and irrigation systems.

Celestial Flancia, district engineer of the Department of Public Works and Highways-Quezon 2nd engineering district, said more farm roads and other infrastructure projects had already been planned and were just awaiting the release of funds.

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Registrant

NOTICE

Notice is hereby given that on February 21, 2007, a sworn Registration Statement was filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission for and on behalf of FIRST METRO SAVE AND LEARN BALANCED FUND, INC. for the registration of One Hundred Million (100,000,000) common shares with a par value of P1.00 each, or an aggregate value of One Hundred Million Pesos (P100,000,000.00), representing its entire authorized capital stock.

According to the papers/documents presented, the following persons are the directors/officers of the corporation:

NAME	POSITION
Atty. Antonio M. Bernardo	Chairman of the Board & Director
Edwin B. Valeroso	President & Director
Eduardo A. Mendoza	Director
Rev. Manuel V. De Leon, OSB	Independent Director
Gloria C. [illegible]	Independent Director
Atty. Nimia B. Pastrana	Corporate Secretary
Danilo G. Olondriz	Chief Financial Officer
Marie Arabella D. Veron	Treasurer
Jonathan T. Tabar	Compliance Officer

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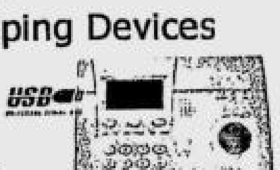

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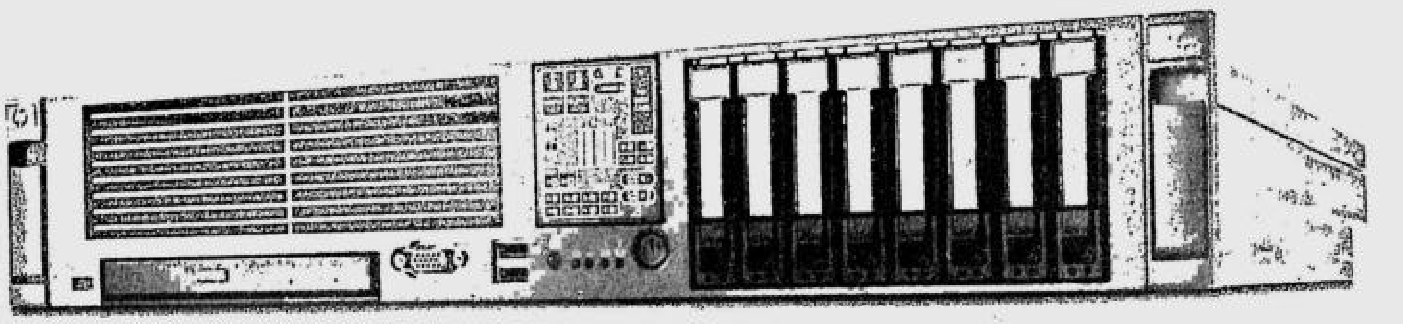

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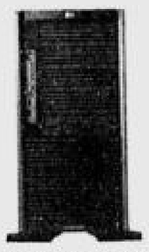

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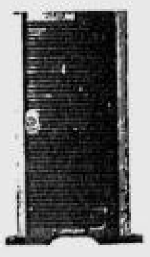

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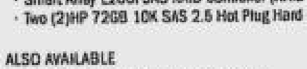

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First Gen maintains focus on expanding local operations

By Abigail L. Ho

WHILE PLANNING TO SPREAD ITS reach overseas, Lopez-owned First Gen Corp. will keep its focus on the Philippine energy market while the opportunity to expand locally, through participation in the privatization of National Power Corp., is present.

"Every now and then, there are groups abroad who say there are good opportunities and would like to partner with us. But we're still studying those opportunities," First Gen vice chair and chief executive Peter Garrucho Jr. said.

First Gen senior vice president Ricardo Tantoco added that efforts of Power Sector Assets and Liabilities Management Corp. to privatize Napocor's assets provided "a once in a lifetime opportunity" to further expand the firm's share in the local power generation market.

FIRST GEN/B7

Banks expanding special product offerings for OFWs

BSP says focus should not only be on remittances

By Doris C. Dumlao

AT LEAST EIGHT BIG COMMERCIAL banks have so far heeded the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas' call for the banking industry to develop and make available special loan, deposit and investment products for overseas Filipino workers.

BSP Governor Amando Tetangco Jr. said the banks now offering a wide array of financial products to OFWs were: Metropolitan Bank and Trust Co., Bank of the Philippine Islands, Equitable PCI Bank, Philippine National Bank, Rizal Commercial Banking Corp., Development Bank of the Philippines, Banco de Oro Universal Bank and Asia United Bank.

Tetangco said the BSP wanted local banks to focus not only on the remittance side of the business but also on other products and financial services that could give OFWs investment options.

In a recent report to Malacañang on initiatives to improve the environment for millions of Filipinos working overseas, the BSP said it was undertaking projects to "streamline the tagging systems of banks to compile and identify OFW accounts with an end in view of granting special incentives to OFWs."

Among the incentives being considered were the relaxation of the maintaining balance requirement of banks on OFWs' deposits and lower interest rates on loans extended to them, the report said.

Several banks now offer OFWs special investment products and services related to insurance, pension plans and real estate.

An earlier study on the Mexican experience showed that the benefits to the economy of remittances held as deposits in the banking system were two to three times higher than if the funds were kept elsewhere. The remittances that pass through the formal channel could be used as investments in productive activities.

This is why the BSP encourages OFWs to use the formal channel and one way to do this is for the banks to make available to them special products and services.

Metrobank, for instance, has "World Cash Card" which enables the beneficiaries to inquire and withdraw remittances through ATMs. The bank has a total of 23 cash transfer, deposit, loan and investment products targeting OFWs.

BPI, which is the largest banking channel of OFW remittances, also offers a wide array of specialized products, including: A 10.99 percent exclusive housing loan rate for 10 years.

To make pricing of remittance charges more transparent for OFWs, the BSP is also set to put up a portal that will link the individual websites of remittance service providers. This portal seeks to promote competition and drive down remittance costs.

Earlier, the BSP required banks and financial institutions to post remittance charges, classification of costs and other relevant information for the benefit of remitters and beneficiaries.

Oil imports down by 43.4% in first 2 months

THE COUNTRY'S OIL IMPORTATION HAS slowed down by about 43.4 percent in the first two months from year-ago level as domestic refiners awaited the further softening in global crude prices before building up inventory.

In a report on Friday, Customs Commissioner Napoleon Morales said his agency's collections contracted in the first two months of the year partly due to the decline in the volume of oil imports to 796,000 metric tons from 1.406 million MT in the same period last year.

But this does not mean that domestic demand for oil has been softening.

"The oil refiners are hedging because the prices are going down," Finance Undersecretary Gil Beltran said.

"They are reducing their inventory, but there's a limit to this because their buffer will last for only six months," Beltran said.

As of last week, global oil prices have fallen below $60 per barrel in Asian trade on forecasts of above-normal temperature in the United States, a major consumer of heating oil and gasoline.

Another reason for the slower importation, Beltran said, was that the oil refiners were spooked by the government's plan to relocate them out of the oil depot in Pandacan, Manila.

Although the Philippines has reduced its reliance on oil over the years, its transportation sector is still largely dependent on this commodity.

Morales said non-oil imports also declined by about 21.1 percent during the period, with the volume reaching only 1.51 million MT from 1.92 MT a year ago.

He said there was a decline of 32 percent or P8.2 billion in the dutiable value to P17.5 billion from P25.7 billion a year ago. *Doris C. Dumlao*

Interbev launching in RP sports drink from Singapore

INTERBEV, IN PARTNERSHIP WITH SINGApore beverage giant Fraser & Neave Ltd., will introduce to the Philippine market 100PLUS, the No. 1 isotonic sports drink in Malaysia and Singapore.

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The product has a 70-percent market share in Singapore and 90 percent in Malaysia.

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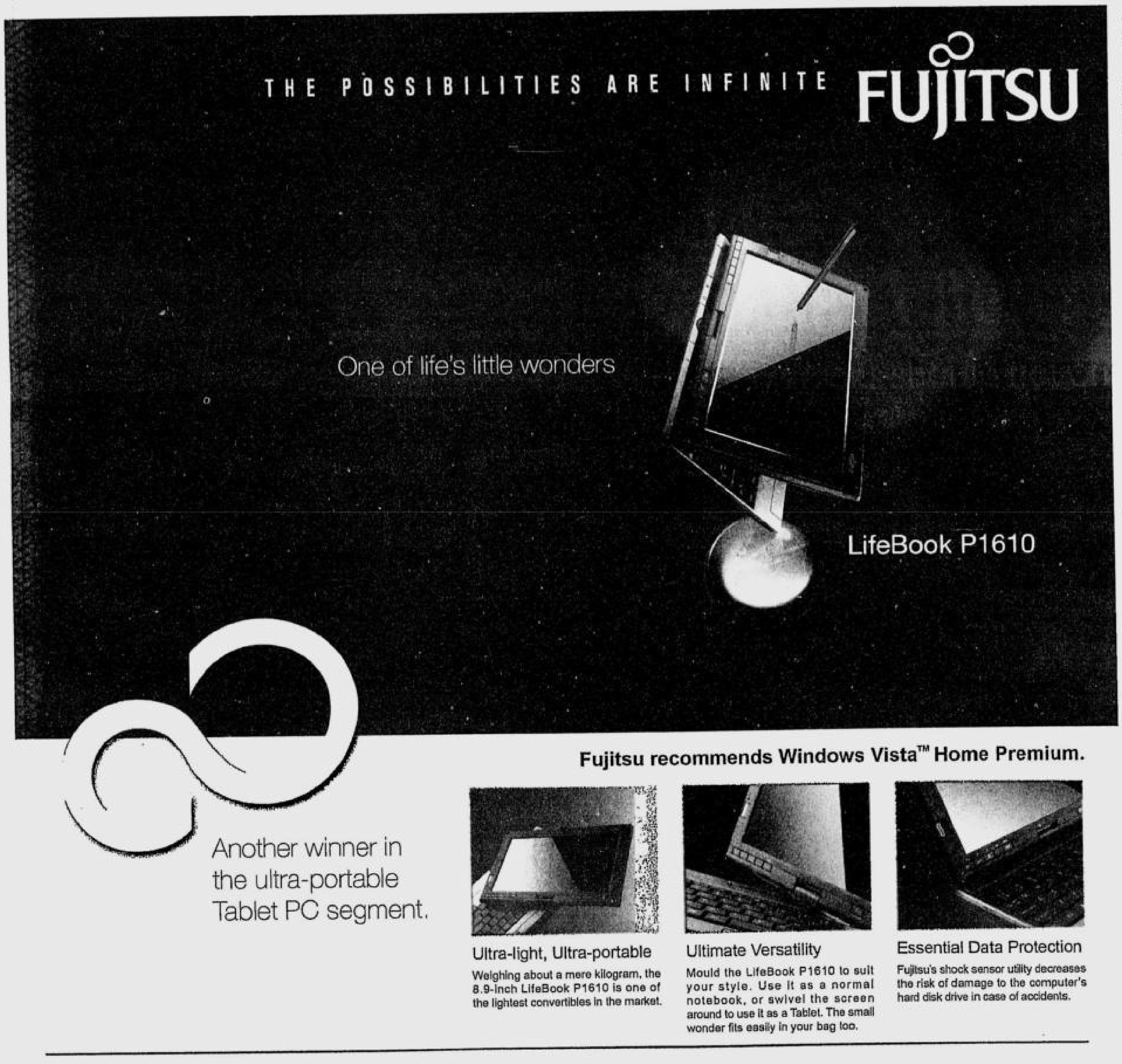

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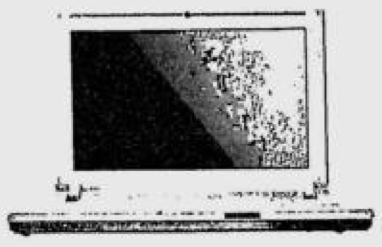

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Higher excise taxes cause market shift to cheaper 'sin' products

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE RISE IN THE EXCISE TAXES ON 'SIN' products has driven most consumers to shift to cheaper brands of cigarettes and alcohol, causing some dent on the government's revenue collections.

Revenue Assistant Commissioner Corazon Pangcog said on Friday that the agency's tax collections were flat in the first two months of the year compared to year-ago levels partly due to the lifting of the 70-percent ceiling on input claims on value added tax, as well as the decline in excise tax collections.

Pangcog said there was front-loading or reduction of inventories last year as manufacturers moved ahead of the increase in the excise tax rates this year.

"There's also the shifting in the consumer preference with regards to products slapped with excise taxes, such as tobacco, cigarettes and liquor," Pangcog said.

"Most of them shifted from medium- to lower-priced brands of liquor and from high- to low-priced brands of cigarettes," she said, without naming the specific brands.

Finance Undersecretary Gil Beltran added that with the 8 percent increase in excise taxes on cigarettes and alcohol this year—as part of a previously enacted excise tax reform law—the government was already bracing for a 46-percent decline in the volume of sales of these products in the first quarter of the year.

But he noted that due to the front-loading of sales in the last three months of 2006, volume had increased by 29 percent during that quarter.

"We already got the revenue ahead of time. Once these inventories are exhausted we'll get the normal amount of (excise tax) collection," he said.

There was no estimate on the actual revenue impact of the shift in consumer preference to cheaper brands, although it was cited as among the major factors that weighed on the Bureau of Internal Revenue's excise tax collections.

For the two-month period, the BIR generated P91 billion, slightly lower than the P91.2 billion in the same period last year.

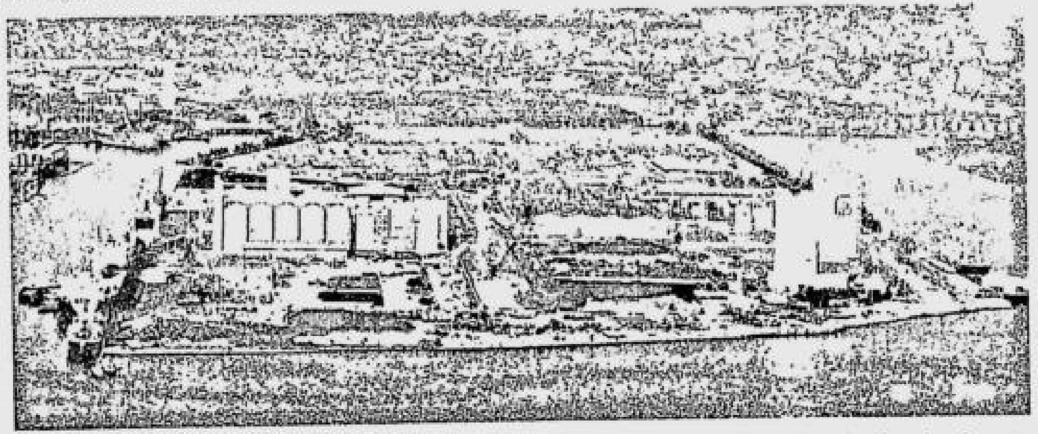
Another reason for the lower tax collection, according to Pangcog, was the lifting of the 70 percent ceiling on the input value added tax claims late last year.

With the scrapping of the cap, she said the accumulated excess input was now being used monthly by producers.

"But this month, these will be exhausted, too, so we'll start having the normal growth rate for VAT," Pangcog said.

She added that economic activity was seasonally slower in the first quarter compared to the fourth quarter.

During this time, she said businesses were still using inventories left from the last quarter of the previous year.



AERIAL view of the reclaimed property that is being considered as relocation site for the depot

Harbour Centre, oil firms in talks over depot transfer

HARBOUR CENTRE PORT TERminal Inc. is holding discussions with the country's big three oil companies for the possible transfer of their oil depot in Pandacan to Harbour Centre, a 79-hectare reclaimed land in Tondo, Manila.

Mikee Romero, chief executive of Harbour Centre, said Pilipinas Shell Petroleum Corp., Chevron Philippines and Petron Corp. were considering the transfer of their depot to Harbour Centre in compliance with a recent Supreme Court decision on the closure of the Pandacan facility.

Romero said Harbour Centre was an excellent site for the depot. He said Total Philippines, another oil company, had already set up its depot in the area.

"What Harbour Centre envisions for the oil companies is an oil island which will be connected by a 500-meter bridgeway from the main Manila Harbour Centre," he said.

This, he explained, would provide maximum security to the depot, efficient environment protection facilities and safety to the nearest communities.

He said Harbour Centre would present this proposal in succeeding meetings with the oil firms.

Manila Mayor Lito Atienza, Harbour Centre said in a statement, was in favor of the proposed transfer of the depot to Harbour Centre.

Atienza, according to the statement, said Harbour Centre, which was classified as an industrial zone, could readily accommodate the depot at a cost much lower than for the oil companies to separately reclaim land for this purpose.

Since the reclaimed site is ready for use and services can immediately be provided for the oil companies, the oil firms would not incur too much expense for the relocation.

Earlier, an official of a local oil company said reclamation would cost an oil firm about P13 billion. Also, the official said it would take about five years to effect the relocation if oil firms still have to undertake reclamation.

The relocation to Harbour Centre can be done in a year.

The relocation is in consonance with Manila City Ordinance No. 8027, which reclassified parts of Pandacan and Sta. Ana from industrial to commercial zones. The ordinance was passed after the Sept. 11, 2001 terrorist attacks in the United States and was aimed at strengthening the security of Manila from hideous attacks of terrorists.

First Gen maintains ...

From page B6

The company is also planning to pursue greenfield projects in different areas of the country, he said.

"If the opportunities abroad make sense and if the structure is correct—predictable income stream, the quality of the power purchase agreement is superb—then, going overseas is not something that we're going to shy away from," he said.

"It has to be something positive for our shareholders and will deliver solid value to them. We will not go abroad just for the sake of going overseas," he added.

Late last year, First Gen president and chief operating officer Federico Lopez said the power firm had already sent people to scout for possible power and water projects in different countries in the Middle East.

No specific countries had been identified, however, he said.

"There's nothing final or specific yet as we are still in the scouting stage. But there are a number of possibilities (that we are looking at) in the Middle East and we have been meeting with government officials there. The demand for integrated power and water projects is high," Lopez said.

Once the preferred Middle Eastern countries were identified, he said First Gen, wether alone or with partners, planned to put up gas-fired power plants with an integrated desalination plant for water production.

He said similar projects in the Middle East were very large scale—usually starting at a capacity of 2,000 megawatts (MW)—making it practical to partner with other entities.

First Gen, through First Gas Power Corp., operates the 1,000-MW Sta. Rita and 500-MW San Lorenzo gas-fired power plants.

It earlier acquired through bidding the 1.6-MW Agusan hydropower plant and the 112-MW Pantabangan-Masiway hydropower plant package, both from Napocor.

The power firm is looking at bidding for more Napocor assets, including the Ambuklao-Binga hydropower package, the Angat hydropower facility, and the Palinpinon and Tiwi-Makban geothermal facilities.

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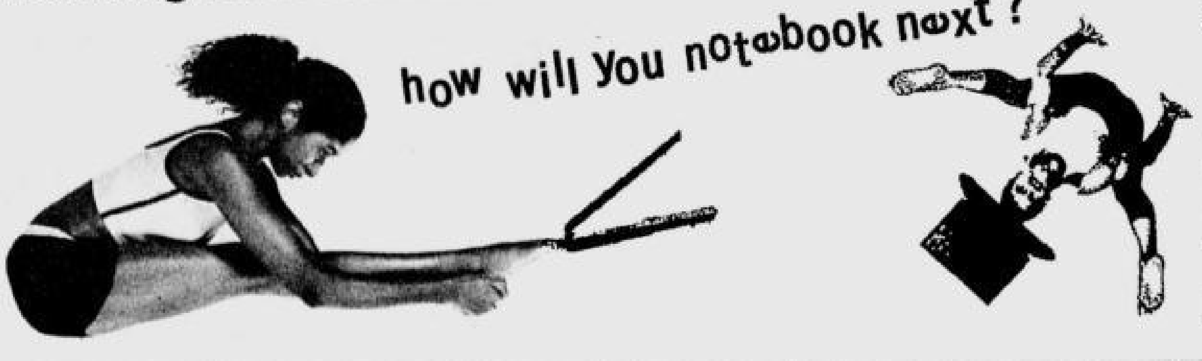
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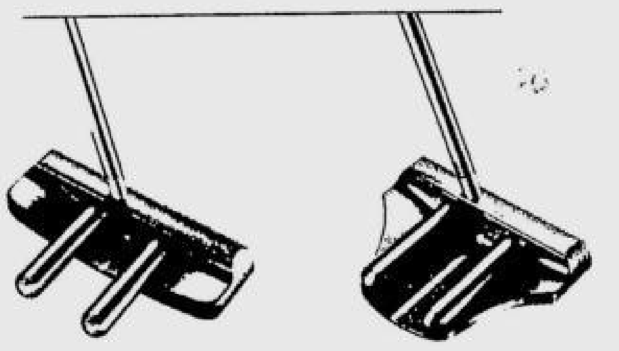

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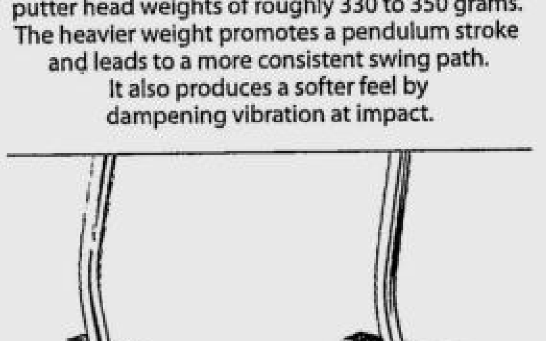

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BSP warns 24 banks over bond price-fixing

But some local, foreign banks claim no wrongdoing

By Doris C. Dumlao

AFTER ALMOST A YEAR OF INVESTIGATION, the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas discovered that 24 commercial banks could be held accountable for the price-fixing of government bonds during the mass sell-off of unit investment trust funds (UITFs) in May 2006.

The BSP has wrapped up its probe on the attempts by some money market traders to "intervene" in the setting of bond benchmarks at the secondary market to cushion price falls during the UITF sell-off last year, BSP sources said.

Out of 39 operating commercial banks, the BSP said 26 banks—including some foreign players—were initially found to have been involved in the price-fixing issue. But the regulator trimmed the list to 24 after it learned that two banks were not involved.

The BSP's policy-making Monetary Board had originally planned to sanction the 24 banks, but it later decided to issue stern warnings instead, sources in the banking sector said.

In a separate interview, BSP Governor Amando Tetangco Jr. confirmed that such a warning was issued to some banks, saying the BSP was committed to prevent a repetition of last year's incident.

"The BSP wrote to them, but the SES (the supervision and examination sector of the BSP) is still looking at certain aspects of that," Tetangco said. "What's important is that it won't happen again."

Some banks, which confirmed receipt of the letter, said the BSP's accusation was without basis.

"We can easily prove we're not guilty because our (market) position at that time was contrary," the president of a local bank said. "We wanted bond prices to fall."

Also, an official of a foreign bank maintained that they did nothing wrong.

"We have strongly contended that their warning is without basis," the official said. "In turn, the BSP clarified that the warning is not a reprimand. A formal letter was sent us to this effect."

Last year, some banks were said to have manipulated prices to cushion the fall of bond rates, in order to protect the net asset valuation of assets being managed by their trust departments.

UITFs are pooled trust funds in acceptable currencies operated by a trust entity and made available by participation which are marked to market values. They are an improved version of the common trust funds (CTFs) now being phased out by the banking system.

Meanwhile, Tetangco said the Money Market Association, now headed by Rizal Commercial Banking Corp. treasurer Sergio Edeza, himself a former BSP chief of treasury, is set to implement fresh reforms to prevent a similar occurrence.

"The market is doing something," Tetangco said. "They are reviewing their code of conduct."

On the regulatory side, he said all necessary reforms had been put in place.

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Sharp rise in metal production seen

PHILIPPINE COPPER OUTPUT IS expected to rise 85 percent this year and gold output by 16 percent due to the opening of new mines funded by foreigners, Environment Secretary Angelo Reyes said on Saturday.

"Our projections show that, indeed, the Philippine mining industry is facing a major takeoff in the next two to three years as five of the world's largest mining players are now in the country doing exploration and mining development," Reyes told Reuters in an e-mail, in response to questions.

The Philippine government wants to attract $6.5 billion in foreign funding for 24 priority mining projects to revive its once mighty minerals industry and stoke economic growth.

Their investment campaign was knocked off course in late-2005 and 2006 after cyanide leaks in a copper and gold mine belonging to Australia's Lafayette Mining Ltd. triggered the wrath of environmentalists and powerful Catholic bishops.

But, with metal prices rising on tight supply, the world's top miners, including BHP Billiton, Anglo-American and Xstrata Plc., as well as smaller players such as Canada's Chemical Vapour Metal Refining Inc., are now exploring lodes in the archipelago.

The government, which estimates that the country has $1 trillion worth of unexplored gold, copper and nickel resources, said mostly foreign firms had so far invested $694 million in the 24 priority projects since 2004.

"An additional $348 million is expected to come in this year, and about $1.5 billion in 2008," said Reyes.

"The Philippine government's revitalization program is now showing positive results as five of the development projects are now in the operating stage, generating foreign exchange and employment for the country as a result of investments."

Reyes said two of the new projects were due to expand their mining operations in the next two years to take advantage of increasing demand in the world metals market.

Rising mineral prices, largely due to demand from China, have already helped propel production in the Philippines. Copper output is expected to increase to 31,423 tons this year and should rise to 46,003 tons in 2008, Reyes said.

A WORKER retrieves a sack of ore in a Compostela Valley mine pit. By 2010, the Philippines expects production of gold to rise to 2.08 million ounces, copper at more than 500,000 tons, and nickel at 60,000 tons. EDWIN BACASMAS

Gold output is forecast to jump to 1.38 million ounces this year from 1.16 million in 2006.

Next year, gold production should increase to 1.57 million ounces, said Reyes, a former Armed Forces chief.

Nickel output, which more than doubled last year to 59,139 tons, is also expected to increase from 2007 to 2009.

The Philippines is forecast to ship around 3.5 million metric tons of nickel ore each year to foreign smelters and refiners from 2007 to 2009, data released by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources showed.

Production at the Coral Bay processing facility, majority owned by Japanese firms led by Sumitomo Metal Mining Co. Ltd., is expected to contain between 10,000 and 11,000 tons of nickel each year from 2007 to 2009.

Coral Bay, the country's sole nickel plant that started production in April 2005, produced the equivalent of 8,242 tons of nickel in 2006, the DENR data showed.

By 2010, the Philippines expects production of gold to rise to 2.08 million ounces, copper at more than 500,000 tons and nickel at 60,000 tons. *Reuters*

2 firms to ship pork products to Singapore

By Rizalene Acac and Judy Quiros
Inquirer Mindanao

DAVAO CITY—TWO COMPANIES BASED IN Mindanao will start exporting hogs and other pork products to Singapore by July, Agriculture Secretary Arthur Yap said.

In his report during the Philippine Economic Briefing Domestic Roadshow held here last week, Yap said Nenita Quality Foods Corp. (NHQF), which is owned by the family of Davao del Norte Rep. Antonio Floirendo, and Matutum Food Corp. based in South Cotabato, were supposed to start sending their products to Singapore in June.

But he said it was moved to July instead.

Yap said officials of Singapore's Agriculture and Veterinary Authority inspected the plants of the two companies in 2005 and found them compliant with food safety standards.

Yap said the venture was part of the government's initiative to sell hogs and pork products to other countries.

He said that Mindanao enjoys an edge, being free from foot-and-mouth disease.

Yap said the Agriculture department has also released the guidelines for the implementation of a comprehensive swine farm inspection system, which would further make the country more appealing to the international market.

Yap said aside from hog and pork products, the government is also optimistic the country could tap the international poultry market.

He said the Philippines is still free of bird flu.

Yap said he already ordered laboratory testing in all poultry farms in Southern Luzon and Northern Mindanao.

Meanwhile, Yap said the government is also planning to create investment desks abroad to generate agri-business interest in the country.

This, he said, will open up more markets for the country's agriculture products and result in more employment opportunities.

He said under the plan, the DA will tap Philippine agricultural attachés in various countries.

"The project is in line with the DA's target to develop two million hectares of agribusiness lands and create two million jobs by 2010," Yap said.

Manila Water

NOTICE OF ANNUAL MEETING OF STOCKHOLDERS

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the Annual Meeting of the Stockholders of **MANILA WATER COMPANY, INC.**, will be held at the Grand Ballroom, Hotel Intercontinental, Makati City, on Tuesday, March 27, 2007, at 9:00 A.M., with the following

AGENDA

1. Determination of quorum
2. Approval of the minutes of the meeting of stockholders on April 3, 2006
3. Annual Report and approval of the Audited Financial Statements as of December 31, 2006 embodied in the Annual Report
4. Ratification of all acts and resolutions during the preceding year of the Board of Directors, Executive Committee, Management Committees and officers
5. Election of directors including independent directors
6. Election of the external auditor and fixing of its remuneration
7. Consideration of such other business as may properly come before the meeting
8. Adjournment

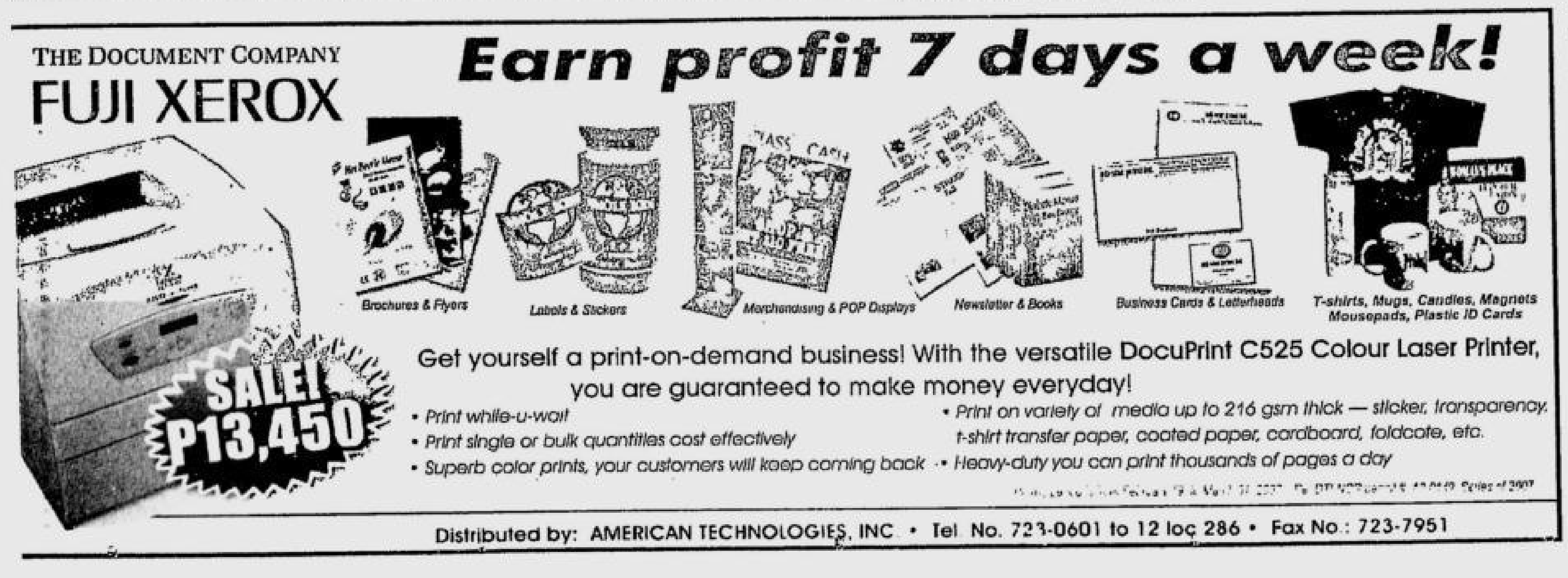
Only stockholders of record as of February 27, 2007 will be entitled to notice and to vote at this meeting. The Stock and Transfer Book of the Company will be closed from February 27, 2007 to March 27, 2007.

The Annual Meeting of Stockholders will be followed by an organizational meeting of the Board of Directors for the election of the officers of the Company and for the transaction of such other business as may properly come before the meeting.

Balara, Quezon City, March 2, 2007

FOR THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

SOLOMON M. HERMOSURA
Corporate Secretary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Gov't hopes to recover PLDT dividends

DOF official thinks it highly unlikely that the total would reach P35B

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE DEPARTMENT OF FINANCE IS looking at ways to recover billions of pesos in cash dividends from the company that held the controlling shares in Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. since its sequestration after the Edsa Revolution.

Finance Undersecretary John Sevilla on Friday said that there was some P2 billion in cash dividend from Philippine Telecommunications Investment Co. (PTIC) held in escrow right now, but there was no estimate available on dividends that have accumulated since the sequestration period.

But he said it would be "extremely unlikely" that the total would reach the P35-billion estimate earlier given by Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita.

"That's something that we'll have to study carefully," Sevilla said. "We're working on a balance that hasn't been declared yet."

The cash dividends currently in escrow account—still the subject of pending legal cases—represented the dividends accrued only since 1998 when the First Pacific group took over a controlling stake in PLDT, he said.

"The dividends paid to PTIC before 1998, we're trying to reconstruct that right now," Sevilla added. "We have information only since 1998 because that was the year that First Pacific gained control of PTIC, and they themselves don't have the data before 1998."

On February 28, the government generated about P25.2 billion from the sale of the sequestered shares in PTIC.

"Conceptually, if the shares were sequestered on a certain date, then all the dividends that accrued from that date until the day we sold the shares belong to the government," he said.

He said the government would thus have a claim on dividends declared even before 1998.

"That's what we're trying to study," Sevilla said. "How much those dividends are, who received it, and those whom we'll run after."

He said the P2 billion estimate for the dividends held in escrow already included interest gains.

LIKE THE CIRCLES THAT YOU FIND... Salt makers in Bago, Negros Occidental, use windmills built from indigenous material bamboo, to pump seawater from an underground aquifer. Farmers looking to earn extra income, turn to salt making, which traditionally starts in March. AFP

Idle Naia 3 bothers BCDA

By Ronnel W. Domingo

THE STATE-RUN BASES Conversion Development Authority is bothered by the delay in the operation of the Ninoy Aquino International Airport Terminal 3, saying that this is depriving BCDA of at least P158 million in revenue a year.

Narciso Abaya, BCDA president and chief executive, said in a briefing that the agency was still locked in a dispute with Manila International Airport Authority on what year the payments should start.

BCDA insists that lease charges for the 63.4-hectare property where the terminal sits should have started in 1998, when the property was turned over to the MIAA.

On other other hand, the MIAA insists payments should start once the terminal is fully operational.

Last month, authorities again postponed the start of operations, citing the terminal's structural defects.

An opinion that would resolve the matter is still pending with the Department of Justice.

"Either way, there would be nothing to charge if the terminal is not operating," Abaya said.

By BCDA reckoning, the MIAA's arrears have accumulated to about P1.3 billion over the past eight years.

BCDA vice president Aileen Zosa said that, under its 25-year least contract, the MIAA should pay P158 million a year in the first five years, with the amount increasing by 10 percent every five years.

"That means P790 million in the first five years plus P521.4 million in the additional three years," Zosa said.

But Abaya claimed that the MIAA had paid an initial P200 million in 2004 to fund a BCDA project.

BSP seen to keep key rates neutral

THE BANGKO SENTRAL NG Pilipinas is almost in a position to set a "neutral" level of overnight policy rates, seeing no need to either hike or cut interest rates which had been kept steady since October 2005.

"Based on our study, we're close to the so-called neutral real interest rate," BSP Deputy Governor Diwa Guinigundo told reporters.

"A neutral interest is when you don't have to move, given configuration of interest rate and inflation," Guinigundo explained. "We are right where we should be basically."

For the 17th straight month, the BSP's policy-making Monetary Board has kept its overnight borrowing rate at 7.5 percent, and the overnight lending rate at 9.75 percent.

But while it maintains a basically "neutral" overnight borrowing rate, the BSP may still use other tools to fine-tune monetary policy.

It was earlier reported that the BSP is drafting new monetary tools to make its open market operations more effective, particularly in view of strong growth in money supply with the infusion of money from abroad, such as the billions of dollars sent home by overseas Filipino workers.

Guinigundo said the overnight rates could be further kept steady by the inflation-targeting BSP to balance existing risks.

Inflation-targeting is a framework for monetary policy that focuses mainly on achieving price stability. This approach entails the announcement of an explicit inflation target that the monetary authority promises to achieve over a given time period.

"We are in a situation where you have excess liquidity but, at the same time, the banks are not lending" Guinigundo said. "Because the banks are not lending, you have a growth that's not maximized. If they are lending, the resources will be used for productive activity. So, in that situation, will you cut interest rates?"

He also explained that the problem "is not the cost of money, but it's (lack of) demand."

"If you bring down interest rates, they will still park their money with us because the BSP rates are still higher than (government securities yields)," he said.

Based on the last auction by the Bureau of Treasury two weeks ago, the 91-day Treasury bill rate, which is used by banks as benchmark in pricing loans, fetched an interest rate of 2.935 percent. It was much lower than the BSP's rates. *Doris C. Dumlao*

Large property firms vie for old Iloilo airport lot

By David Israel Sinay
Inquirer Visayas

ILOILO CITY—SOME OF THE country's largest property firms have expressed their interest to participate in the bidding of the 54-hectare old Iloilo Airport.

According to Iloilo City Mayor Jerry Treñas, the companies are Rockwell, SM Prime Holdings, Ayala Land Inc., Robinson's Land Corporation and Filinvest Land Inc.

Air carriers Cebu Pacific and Philippine Airlines are also eyeing the property, located in Mandurriao district, Treñas added.

The government is pushing for the sale of the property after it decided to transfer airport operations to a new site.

The new airport, which is located on a 188-hectare lot straddling the municipalities of Sta. Barbara, Cabatuan and San Miguel, is expected to start operations in April.

The Department of Finance had already announced the bidding of the property and urged interested parties to submit their bids starting March 27.

Finance Undersecretary John Philip Sevilla, who was in Iloilo last week for the pre-bidding conference, said representatives of the seven companies had verbally conveyed their interest in acquiring the property.

Sevilla, who chairs the bids and awards committee, said the government would require the winning bidder to pay 25 percent of the bid price as down payment.

He added that the government expects the winning bidder to settle the balance within one year.

The winning bid would require the approval of the Privatization Council of the Departments of Finance, the Department of Trade and Industry, the Department of Budget Management, the Department of Justice and the National Economic Development Authority, Sevilla said.

He added that the government requires all bidders to deposit a bond of P150 million.

However, the winning bidder would have to take care of squatters occupying the property. Sevilla said there are about 300 households of informal settlers living in the area.

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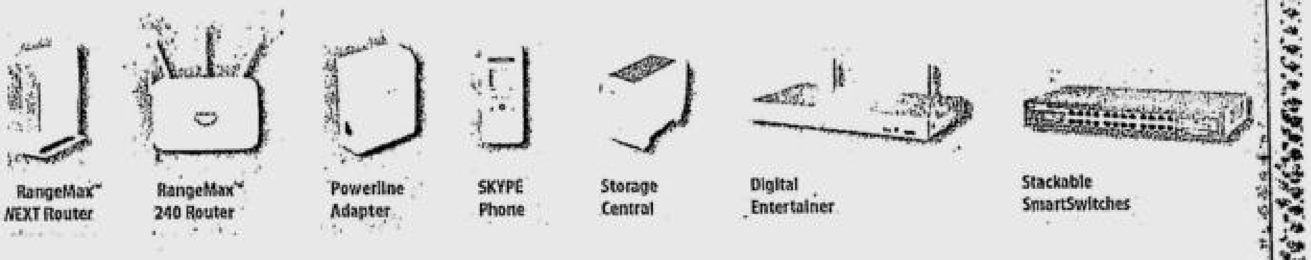

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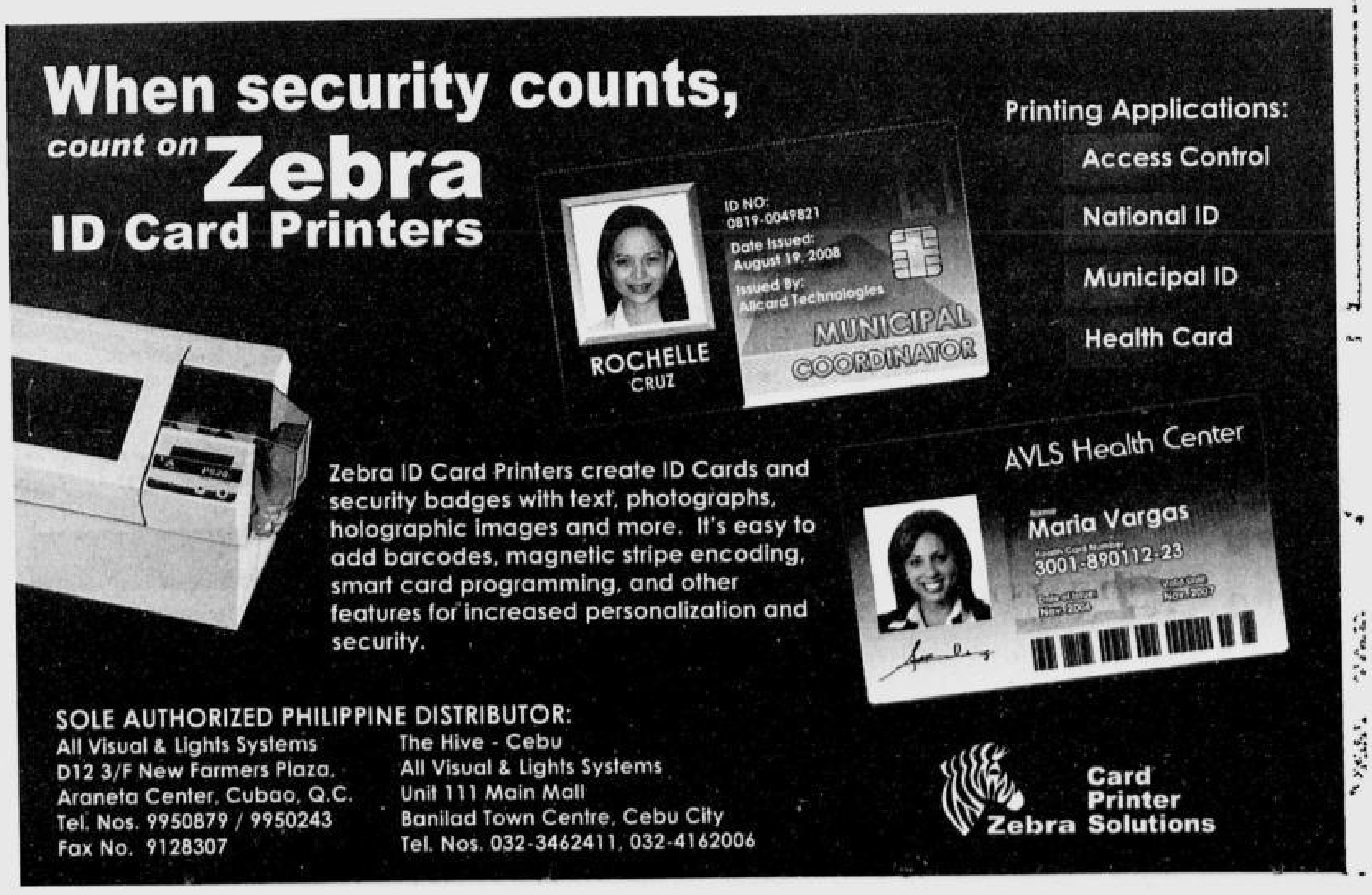

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DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Division of Misamis Oriental
A. Velez Street, Cagayan de Oro City
Telephone No. 856-4454 Fax No. 856-4524

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The DepEd, Division of Misamis Oriental, through its Bids and Awards Committee (BAC), invites suppliers/manufacturers/distributors/contractors to apply for eligibility and to bid for the hereunder project:

Name of Project : **SUPPLY AND DELIVERY OF SCHOOL FURNITURE 75% OF CY 2006 ALLOCATION**
Location : **DepEd, Division of Misamis Oriental**
Brief Description : **Item No. (1) 800 sets of Elementary Desks (consists of table and 2 Chairs) for Grades I - IV - all wood**
Item No. (2) 825 sets of Elementary Desks (consists of table and 2 Chairs) for Grace V - VI - all wood
Item No. (3) 2,970 pcs. of Secondary Armchairs - all wood
Item No. (4) 122 sets of Teacher's Table and Chair - all wood
ABC & Funding Source : **Php 6,128,000.00 - CY 2006 GAA**
Contract Duration : **ONE HUNDRED TWENTY (120) CALENDAR DAYS**

Bidding will be conducted through open competitive bidding procedures using non-discretionary pass/fail criteria as specified in the Implementing Rules and Regulations of R.A. 9184 known as the Government Procurement Reform Act, and is restricted to organizations with at least sixty percent (60%) interests or outstanding capital stocks belonging to citizens of the Philippines, as specified in Republic Act 5183. Only bids from Bidders who pass the eligibility check will be opened. The process for the eligibility check is described in Section II, Instruction to Bidders of the Bidding Documents.

The schedule of BAC activities is as follows:

Activity	Date	Venue
1. Issuance of Bid Documents	March 23-29, 2007	Division Office Building DepEd, Division of Mis. Or. A. Velez St., Cag. De Oro City
2. Pre-bid Conference	April 4, 2007 2:00 PM	Division Office Conference Room DepEd, Division of Mis. Or. A. Velez St., Cag. De Oro City
3. Deadline of Submission of Bids	April 17, 2007 10:00 AM	Mis. Or. Div. Office, Cag. De Oro City
4. Opening of Bids	April 17, 2007 10:00 AM	Mis. Or. Div. Office, Cag. De Oro City
5. Bid Evaluation	April 18-22, 2007	Mis. Or. Div. Office, Cag. De Oro City
6. Post-qualification	April 23-27, 2007	
7. Notice of Award	May 3, 2007	

Bid Documents will be available only to **prospective bidders** upon payment of a non-refundable amount of **TWO THOUSAND (Php2,000.00) Pesos** to the **DepEd, Division of Misamis Oriental Cashier.**

The BAC of the DepEd, Division of Misamis Oriental reserves the right to accept or reject any bid, and to annul the bidding process and reject all bids at any time prior to the contract award, without thereby incurring any liability to the affected Bidder or bidders.

(Sgd.) **LIBORIA P. TARE**
BAC Member

(Sgd.) **BERNADETTE P. SAMACO**
BAC Member

(Sgd.) **FLORA B. ESCALONA**
BAC Member

(Sgd.) **JOHNNY REDONDO**
BAC Member

(Sgd.) **NORBERTO E. ROSALES**
TWG - BAC Chairman

Approved by:

(Sgd.) **BERTILLA B. RAYOS, Ph.D.**
BAC Chairman

(PDI - March 17 & 19, 2007)

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Chief Engr	from US$4,950.-	6 mos. Contract
2nd Engr	from US$3,795.-	8 mos. Contract
3rd Engr	from US$2,640.-	10 mos. Contract
Electrician	from US$3,019.-	10 mos. Contract
C/Cook	from US$1,378.- to US$1,486.-	10 mos. Contract
Ck/B (AB/Ck)	from US$1,067.-	10 mos. Contract
Bosun/Fitter	from US$1.105.- to US$1,213.-	10 mos. Contract
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Republic of the Philippines
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INVITATION TO RE-BID

The Dr. Jose Fabella Memorial Hospital invites interested bidders for the re-bid of:

	ABC
IMMUNOLOGY ANALYZER RENTAL	P4,704,000/year

Bid documents may be secured at the BAC Secretariat, Administrative Office. For details, please contact telephone no. 735-7144.

Schedule of Activities:

Pre-bid Conference	March 26, 2007 @ 2:00 p.m.	Reception Room
Bid Opening	April 10, 2007 @ 2:00 p.m.	Reception Room

The DJFMH reserves the right to reject any or all bids, to waive any formality found therein and to accept such bids as may be considered advantageous to the government.

The DJFMH-BAC assumes no obligation to compensate or indemnify the bidders for any expenses or losses that may be incurred in the preparation of bids nor does it guarantee that an award will be made.

(Sgd.) **ELISEA S. MARQUEZ, M.D., D.P.B.A**
Chairperson, Bids and Awards Committee

(PDI – Mar. 19, 2007)

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Interested applicants may send their Resume with 2x2 picture and other credentials to:

LABOR AND EMPLOYMENT CENTER
Bldg 225, Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority
Subic Bay Freeport Zone

PNOC-ENERGY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION
Energy Complex, Merritt Road
Fort Bonifacio, Taguig City 1634
Tel. No. 893-1320, Local 5285 and Local 5288

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND BID

The PNOC-Energy Development Corporation is inviting all interested suppliers to apply and submit sealed bids for the supply and delivery of the following:

	APPROVED BUDGET
Various Sizes of Carbon Steel Pipes	
Under FGJ 60706	*PHP 64,000,000.00*
Under FGT 64572 and FGT 64591	*PHP 3,030,000.00*
Various Lengths of Capillary Coiled, Stainless Steel Tubings	**APPROVED BUDGET**
Under GQ 707101	*PHP 26,000,000.00*

Eligibility forms and bidding documents shall be available for issuance at the above address c/o **Roderick R. Cabantog** *(for the pipes)* and **Arvin Jose A. Gomez** *(for the tubings)* starting **March 19, 2007**, from **9:30 AM to 3:30 PM** and upon payment of a non-refundable fee of PHP 400.00 per document.

For purposes of clarifying certain matters, a pre-bidding conference shall be held on **March 29, 2007, 2:00 p.m.** at the above address.

Applications for eligibility and sealed bids shall be submitted to, and registered with the PNOC-EDC Supply, Property and Materials Management Division, at the above address and thereafter dropped in the padlocked bid box thereat not later than **2:00 p.m.** (Supply Management Department Office Wall Clock Time) of **April 12, 2007**. Public opening of bids shall follow immediately thereafter. **Late bids shall not be accepted.**

Prospective bidders shall signify conformance to the bidding terms and conditions, as required, and shall ensure the same through proper submission/execution. Source of funding is from Internal Cash Generation of PNOC-EDC. All bids should be within the Approved Budget for the Contract in order to qualify.

PNOC-Energy Development Corporation reserves the right to annul the bidding process, to reject any or all bids, to waive any informality in the bids received and to accept such bid which is most advantageous to PNOC-EDC without thereby incurring liability to the affected bidder or bidders or any obligation to inform the affected bidder or bidders of the ground(s) for PNOC-EDC's action.

Chairman, Bids and Awards Committee II

(PDI–March 19, 2007)

NOTICE OF DISSOLUTION OF YELLOW CAB BICUTAN FOOD CORPORATION

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the Articles of Incorporation of YELLOW CAB BICUTAN FOOD CORPORATION has been duly amended by shortening the corporate term thereof and thereby dissolving the said corporation as of February 15, 2007.

(Sgd.) **VICTORIA M. VIZCONDE**
Corporate Secretary

(PDI–March 5, 12 & 19, 2007)

ANNOUNCEMENT

TO ALL U.P. CREDIT COOPERATIVE MEMBERS:

You are all invited to attend the 62nd Annual General Assembly and Election of Officers on Friday, **March 30, 2007**, at **ANG BAHAY NG ALUMNI**, UP Campus, Diliman, Quezon City. Registration will start at **1:00 p.m.** followed by General Assembly and Election of Officers until **5:00 p.m.**

Thank you.

THE MANAGEMENT
UP CREDIT COOPERATIVE

(PDI – Mar. 19, 2007)

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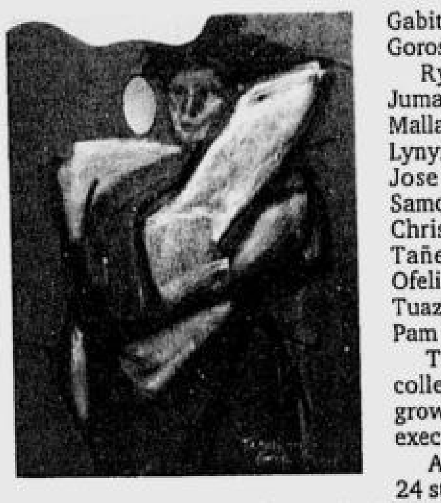
'Through the Palette's Eye' at the CCP



AFTER A YEAR-LONG UNIVERSITY TOUR, "Through the Palette's Eye" – an exhibition of paintings on palettes by Filipino artists – goes to the Cultural Center of the Philippines (CCP) Bulwagang Juan Luna (Main Gallery).

The exhibit, featuring the unique collection of Singapore-based Filipino art lovers Rico and Melannie Hizon that celebrates the ultimate artist's icon – the palette – will open on March 23, Friday, and run until May 7. The show is co-presented by the CCP, Art Sentral Manila and Good News Pilipinas, and is sponsored by AyalaLand, PLDT, Mercedes-Benz, Figaro, CB Richard Ellis, Unilever and 1st Life Insurance Corporation.

Palettes of various shapes and sizes bear a remarkably wide range of artistic styles as executed by both established and upcoming talents. National Artist Benedicto Cabrera (Bencab) recreated his favorite image Sabel, while other Filipino masters depicted their trademark themes – Anita Magsaysay-Ho and her barrio women, Malang and his woman vendor, Romulo Olazo and the *kasuy* (cashew), Manuel Baldemor and his folksy townscape, Norma Belleza and her rural characters and Angel Cacnio and the *sabong* (cockfight).

Abstracts were made by Lao Lianben, the late Pacita Abad, Raul Isidro, Soler, Joe Datuin and Roland Bay-an. Figurative expression was done by the likes of Lydia Velasco, Emmanuel Garibay and Kiko Escora and social realism by Charlie Co and Nunelucio Alvarado. Virgilio Pandy Aviado made a wood etching, while Lizanne Uychaco did a sample of her favored feng shui art.

Sculptural pieces have also been created by Gerry Leonardo, Sajid Imao, Eng Chan and Ige Ramos.

Completing the roster of participating artists are: Hermes Alegre, Wilfredo Alicdan, Marcel Antonio, Allan Jay Balisi, Yveese Belen, Elmer Borlongan, Froilan Calayag, Joey Cobcobo, Convocar, Daniel Coquilla, Emmanuel Cordova, Marc Vincent Cosico, Mario de Rivera, Patrick de Veyra, Alfredo Esquillo Jr., Karen Flores, Romeo Forbes, James Gabito, Rowena Gaborni, Waling Waling Gorospe, Gregory Raymond Halili;

Ryan Jara, Gerladine Javier, Winner Jumalon, Mark Justiniani, Lao Lianben, Joy Mallari, Ferdie Montemayor, Justin Nuyda, Lynyrd Paras, Mario Parial, Ryan Rubio, Jose Tence Ruiz, Don Salubayba, Bin Samonte, Jose John Santos III, Stevesantos, Christian Tamondong, Sherwin Tan, CJ Tañedo, Rodel Tapaya, Claude Tayag, Ofelia Gelvezon Tequi, Rishab Tibon, Wire Tuazon, Clairelynn Uy, Olan Ventura and Pam Yan Santos.

There are now over 70 works in the collection, but the number continues to grow as the Hizons tap selected artists to execute works using palettes.

As a special feature for the CCP exhibit, 24 students of the Philippine High School for the Arts in Makiling were invited to make paintings on oval palettes measuring 8 x 11 inches. The exercise, done as part of their visual arts class, challenged the young students to work with the limited and unusual space, and even the palette's hole.

"Through the Palette's Eye" at the CCP also includes a segment featuring palette trivia and palette art events in other countries, based on research by exhibit curators Susan A. de Guzman and Giselle P. Kasilag.

"Through the Palette's Eye" was first presented at the Crucible Gallery in September 2005. For its campus tour last year, it was hosted by the De La Salle University Museum, the University of the Philippine Jorge B. Vargas Museum, the University of Santo Tomas Museum of Arts and Sciences and the Enderun Colleges.

With the CCP exhibit, the Hizons are hoping that "Through the Palette's Eye" will engage more audiences with its eclectic display of Filipino art.

The CCP Main Gallery is located at the 3rd level of the CCP Main Building along Roxas Boulevard. Gallery hours are from 10am to 6pm, Tuesdays to Sundays, with a holy week break April 2-9. Admission is free. For inquiries, call the CCP Visual Arts Unit at 8323702, or text 0917-8804754 or 0915-8815218.

NATIONAL FOOD AUTHORITY ASSISTANT ADMINISTRATOR FOR Stabilization Conrado DL. Ibañez (4th from left) reads the offer (inset) of rice exporting companies for the supply of 580,000 metric tons of long grain white rice during the NFA's recent bidding for the rice importation. Scheduled to arrive until June, the imported rice will substantially augment the first quarter palay harvest and beef up the country's food security stocks. Also in photo are members of NFA Bids and Awards Committee including (from left) directors Leticia Cruz, Nicolas Crisostomo, Efren Sabong, BAC chairman and deputy administrator Ludovico J. Jarina, assistant corporate auditor Annie Pineda and assistant administrator for administration Concepto R. Irigo. Also present during the bidding were members of the media and civil society.

PhilHealth launches Peer Review Digest

THE Philippine Health Insurance Corporation (PhilHealth) launches the first volume of the Peer Review Digest developed by its Quality Assurance Research and Policy Development Group (QARPDG).

The Peer Review Digest is a 24-page compilation of the works and decisions of the Peer Review Committee, which is composed of different associations in the field of medicine. It covers issues on compensability, case typing, determining the Relative Value Unit (RVU) of certain surgical procedures, emergency nature of illnesses and other medical practice issues.

Madeleine R. Valera, MD, MscIH (Heidelberg), PhilHealth Vice President for QARPDG and Officer-in-charge of Health Finance Policy and Services Sector (HFPSS) said that they wanted to have a material that will serve as a guide to members and health care providers to determine the compensability of certain drugs and procedures, appropriateness of care and emergency nature of care, among others.

Aside from the journal, PhilHealth also continues to promote the implementation of the Benchbook, a set of standards upon which the quality of care of hospitals is assessed. To strengthen PhilHealth's quality assurance efforts, a seal of excellence and quality awards will also be given to hospitals to inspire them to continue improving on their services.

The Peer Review Digest will soon be distributed to PhilHealth Regional Offices and accredited hospitals and will be available at www.philhealth.gov.ph.

OBITUARIES

MARINA P. COSTA

died on March 15, 2007 at the age of 62.

Interment : March 22, 2007, Thursday, 3:00 p.m.
Roman Catholic Cemetery
Address : 85 San Gregorio St., Indang, Cavite
Tel : 046-4158154

Death Notices

TERESITA ABAD

Peacefully joined her Creator on March 8, 2007 at the age of 74.

Her remains lie in state at Funeraria Paz (Sucat). Interment will be at the Manila Memorial Park (Sucat) tomorrow after the 8:00 am Mass.

JUSTICE ANTONIO M. MARTINEZ

peacefully joined his Creator on March 16, 2007 at the age of 78.

His remains lie in state at Santuario de San Jose, Greenhills, San Juan.

Interment will be on March 21, 2007 at the Heritage Park, Taguig City.

> "There is an appointed time
> for everything, and a time
> for every affair under the heaven..."
> Ecclesiastes 3:11

Wall St awaits Fed meeting

Concerns on US economy remain

NEW YORK—WALL STREET LOOKS to the Federal Reserve meeting this week for reassuring words about the economy as the market tries to shake off its latest turbulence and fears about a downturn.

As skittishness grew about a mushrooming crisis in the US housing sector, the main indexes suffered hefty losses over the past week.

The Dow Jones Industrial Average lost 1.35 percent over the week to Friday to end at 12,110.41, handing back gains from the prior week.

The broad-market Standard & Poor's 500 fell 1.13 percent to 1,386.95 and the tech-dominated Nasdaq composite dropped 0.62 percent to close the week at 2,372.66.

The markets were roiled by concerns about the increasingly precarious situation in the US housing market, with rising delinquencies, especially in the so-called "sub-prime" segment of the mortgage market.

This brought a sharp sell-off, which reminded market participants that the carnage from the global equities rout last month ignited in Shanghai may not have run its course.

According to the Mortgage Bankers Association, delinquencies on home loans reached a three-year high of 4.95 percent of all outstanding loans in late 2006 and 13.33 percent for so-called "sub-prime" loans to people with poor credit histories.

Some fear a scenario in which failures among sub-prime lenders ripple into the banking sector, leading to a credit squeeze and hurting consumer spending, the key driver of the US economy.

A question for markets is how the Fed responds to the housing woes. Some say the central bank's role is not to bail out those who made or took out speculative loans, but if the economic ripples become big enough the Fed may be forced to act, some say.

"Everybody is interested to see if (the housing market) continues to deteriorate," said Hugh Johnson at Johnson Illington Advisors.

Although the Fed is expected to keep rates steady at its two-day meeting Tuesday and Wednesday, Johnson said the statement from the central bank would provide clues on how the Fed would respond to a wider crisis.

"The market would like to see some evidence that the Fed is going to respond sooner and decisively to these problems," he said.

Others say it may be too optimistic to think the Fed will ease interest rates to come to the rescue of lenders and homeowners. And the central bank has to keep inflation in mind, especially after hotter-than-expected reports over the past week on consumer and wholesale prices. *AFP*

Oil prices dip on US worries

NEW YORK—OIL PRICES FELL FRIDAY amid concerns about a slowdown in US economic growth.

The losses followed small early gains after the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries decided on Thursday, as expected, to keep existing supply limits in place.

US crude settled 44 cents weaker at $57.11 a barrel. It was the lowest level since late January for the April contract, which expires on Tuesday.

London Brent crude fell 38 cents to $60.30 a barrel. Brent has risen to trade at a premium over US crude because of production disruptions in Nigeria and a firm North Sea market.

Oil prices have been under pressure as troubles in the US housing finance sector have heightened fears in world stock markets about the health of the economy in the United States, the world's biggest oil consumer.

Opec had been widely expected to make no change to supply curbs at its meeting in Vienna on Thursday.

But analysts said the Opec decision to meet next in September, rather than in June, could be supportive to prices.

Opec, which pumps more than a third of the world's oil, shares concerns about the US economy.

"We are watching developments on world stock markets, to assess their possible impact on the global economy and, in particular, on energy demand," said Opec president Mohammed bin Dhaen al-Hamli, the United Arab Emirates' oil minister. *Reuters*

Investors look to the stars for clues

SAO PAULO—AS FINANCIAL strategists with backgrounds in economics and engineering struggle to determine when the current bout of market turbulence will subside, other investors are looking into outer space for answers from the stars.

Mauricio Bernis, an astrologist and columnist for a weekly financial magazine in Brazil, said last month's stock sell-off could be seen in advance on astrological maps.

"The lunar eclipse on March 3 was related to Uranus, which usually causes strong instability and market inversions," said Bernis.

On Feb. 27, the Dow Jones Industrial Average had its steepest fall since 9/11.

In the United States, Henry Weingarten of the Astrologers Fund, a New York based investment fund, said a slump in the United States housing market will worsen.

"We have a real estate recession that astrologically is similar to 1989. Some people are saying its over. It's not over," Weingarten said by telephone from New York.

He uses astrological maps to complement statistical and economic analysis of financial markets.

"This certainly is starting to affect the stock markets...there will certainly be an increase in flight to quality and away from risk."

Ignacio Zurita is a Brazilian businessman who has been using astrological maps to help make financial decisions over the last two years.

Still, astrology is not well accepted in financial markets.

Hanna Opitz, a consultant in the field of semiotics or symbolism in Brazil, said a colleague's client was fired from a bank after he admitted to using astrological maps.

"The prejudice has not declined. When I foresee something that ends up really happening, there should be a boom in the number of clients, but nothing happens," she said.

"Astrology is a thing that bothers people in financial markets. There are a lot of quacks, but there are also serious people doing it." *Reuters*

Pag-IBIG...

From page B3

counting standards, putting up loan-loss provisions like banks even if it was not required to do so.

"Last year, we provided P2 billion in loan-loss provisions. If we had not provided last year, income would be much higher," Quimbo said.

The fund recently sold P2 billion in five-year bonds at a record-low coupon rate during an oversubscribed auction, out of which P700 million would be offered to retail investors.

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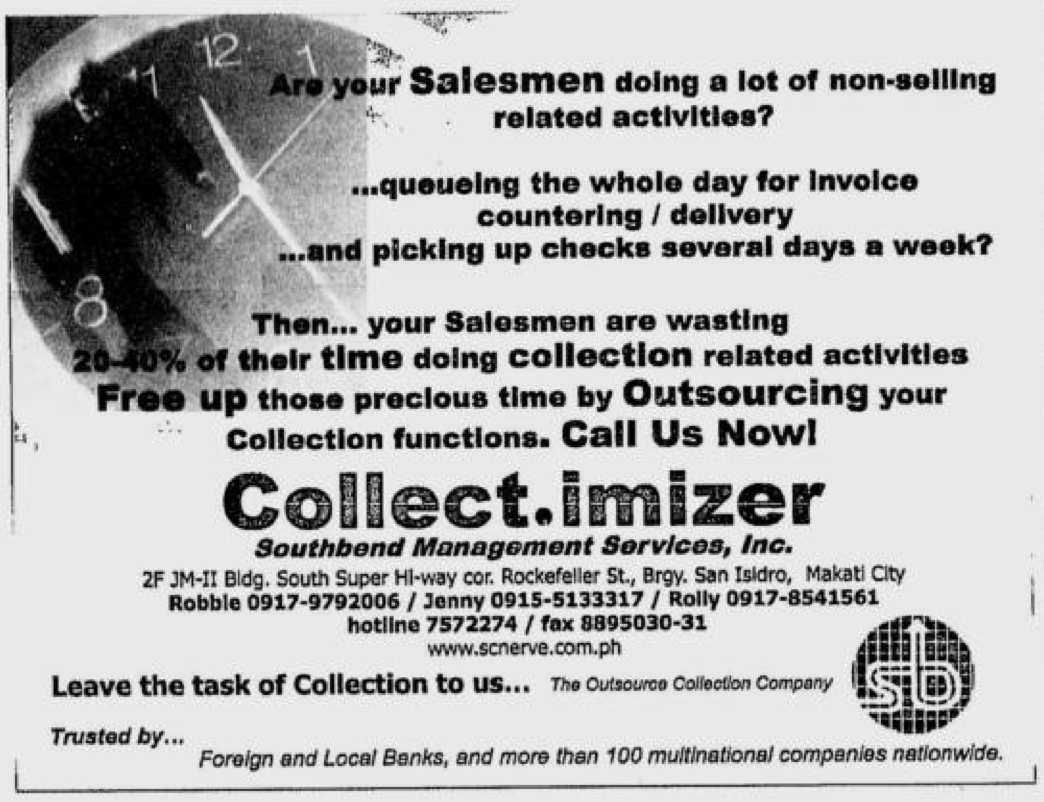

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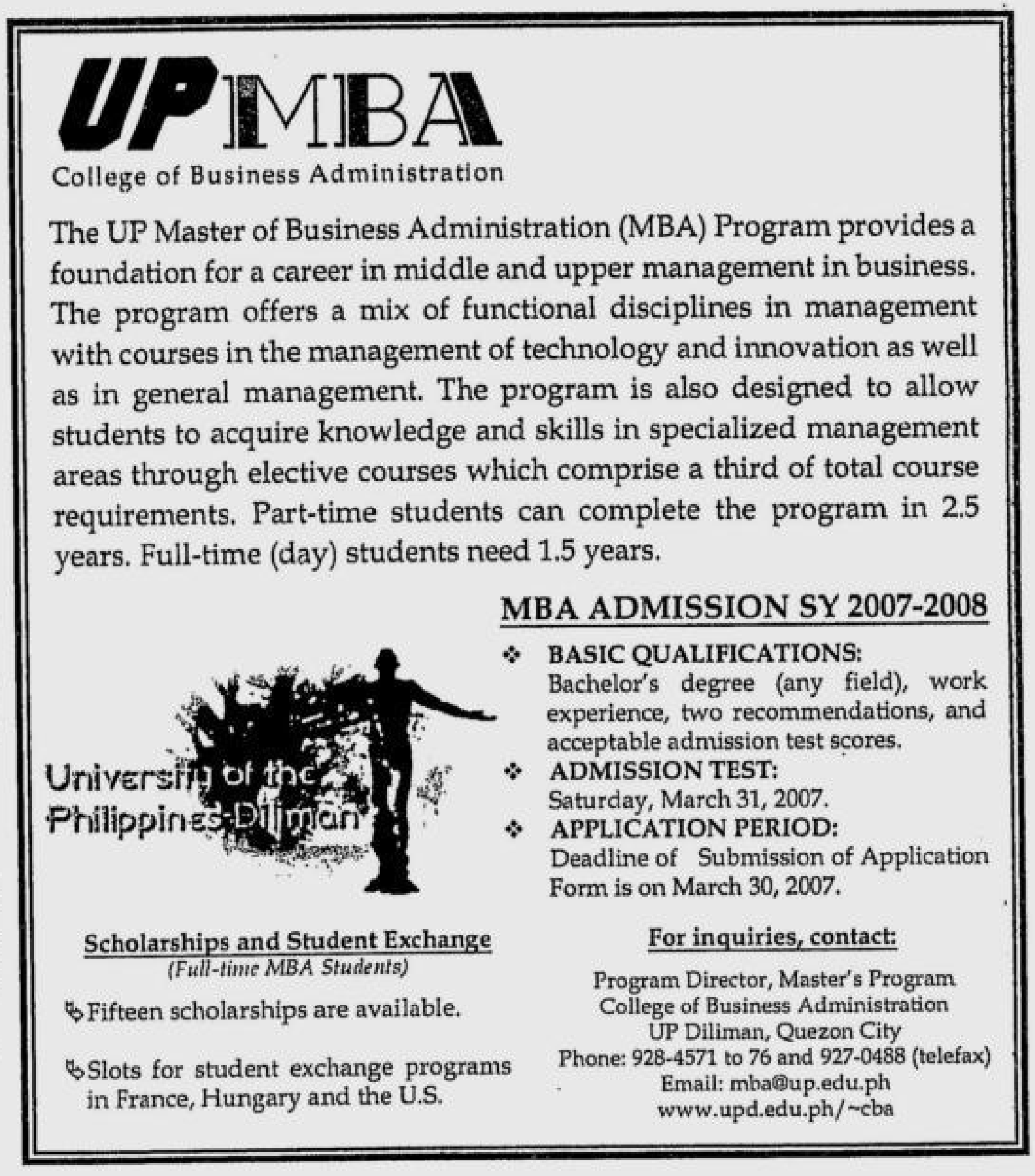

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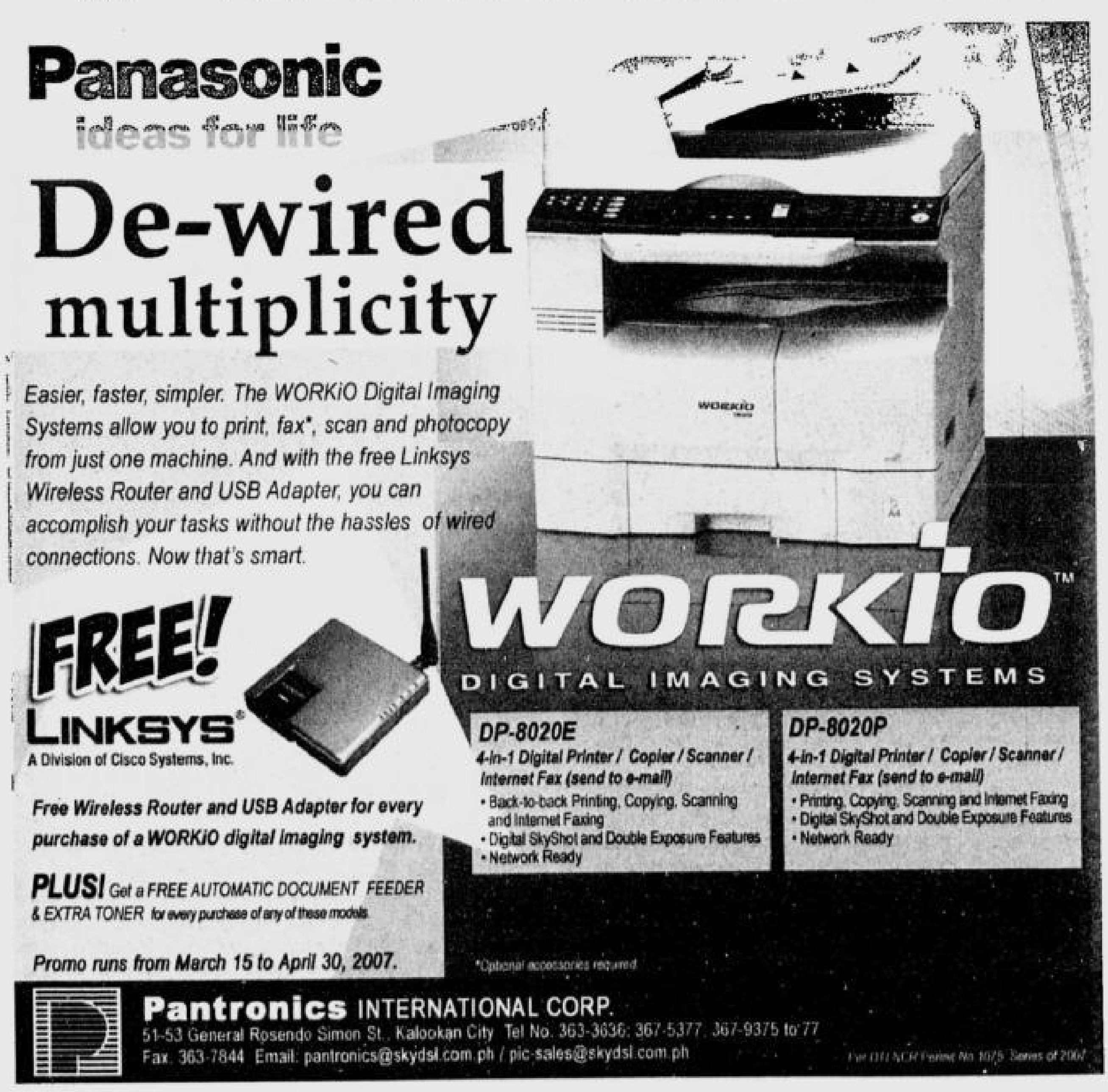

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PublishAsia 2007 Philippine committee all set

THE PUBLISHASIA 2007 PHILIPPINE committee, composed of four of the leading newspapers n the country, is all geared up in support of the upcoming biggest newspaper event ever in the Philippines. The committee has been working feverishly in coordination with Ifra, the major worldwide organization of newspapers and publishers, which is the main organizer of the annual event.

PublishAsia 2007 brings into the country publishers from all over Asia. It will be held in Manila from March 26 to 28 at the historic landmark, Manila Hotel. Over 300 delegates from the leading newspapers in the region and some 150 local participants including CEOs, presidents, CIOs, COOs, general managers, editors and writers are expected to join PublishAsia 2007. This is the first time that the conference will be held in the Philippines, after having it in other Asian cities for the last six years. PublishAsia is dubbed as the number 1 networking platform in Asia. This year's theme is "Reinventing for Today's Business, Creating for Tomorrow's Challenges". It aims to tackle the multifarious challenges the print media industry faces today.

The PublishAsia 2007 Philippine committee was convened by the heads of the four publications-Emil Yap of Manila Bulletin, Sandy Prieto-Romualdez of the Philippine Daily Inquirer, Miguel Belmonte of Philippine Star and Dante "Klink" Ang Jr of Manila Times. The working group includes Barbie Atienza, Badette Cunanan and Czarina Mercado of Manila Bulletin, Jocel Adorable, Connie Kalagayan, Chris Vida and Jong Arcano of INQUIRER, Jay Sarmiento of Philippine Star and Rhea Catada of Manila Times. The City of Manila Tourism Office and the Department of Tourism-Philippine Conventions and Visitors Corp (PCVC) are also lending a hand in setting the stage for the conference. This is the first collective initiative that brings together the major players in the industry.

Aside from the conference, which promises to be an exciting and productive learning and networking experience, the committee is also taking the opportunity to showcase the beauty of the Philippines and the dynamism and progressiveness of the local newspaper industry. On March 26, a night golf tournament has been organized for delegates, exhibitors and local media at the Intramuros Golf capped with a fellowship gathering at Club Intramuros. For non-golfers, a Walk the Wall experience and a half day city tour will be made available.

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo will be gracing the opening ceremonies at 9 a.m. of March 27 as guest of honor. A welcome dinner will be hosted by Manila Bulletin at its facilities and plant in Intramuros. Delegates will be shuttled by kalesas and will be treated to native folk entertainment. The Department of Tourism/PCVC will be hosting a Philippine cocktail night on March 28 at the Puerta Real Gardens, which will be followed by the Asian Media Awards Dinner as sponsored by Manila Bulletin and the Philippine committee.

Publishers, executives, managers, production and technical people from all the publication companies are invited to register and attend PublishAsia 2007. For inquiries, interested parties may call 524-5059 or 527-8121 local 230.

JG SUMMIT BASH WINS ANVIL AWARD

For the successful execution of JG Summit's 50th anniversary and John Gokongwei Jr's 80th birthday celebration, JG Summit Holdings Inc and Stratworks Marketing Communications won an Anvil Award of Merit for Special Events from the Public Relations Society of the Philippines. The event was highlighted by Gokongwei's P10-billion-peso pledge to philanthropy and attracted high-profile guests as well as media support from the BBC and CNBC. Shown are (from left), 42nd Anvil Awards juror and Meridian founder Myla Villanueva, Stratworks managing director Donna Nievera-Conda, events and promo director Liezl Rustia, and production director Oliver Conda.

Third leg marks Honda's successful fuel eco run

THE TOTALLY AMAZING FUEL ECO Run, a fuel efficiency driving competition organized by Total (Philippines) Corp and Honda Cars Philippines Inc (HCPI), beckoned truly amazing fuel consumption results on its third leg.

Honda owners drove their 1.8 A/T (automatic transmission) and M/T (manual transmission) i-VTEC engine-powered Civic cars under highway driving, with a full tank of Total Premium Unleaded gasoline, traveling a total distance of 73.8 km.

"Life keeps getting better when people learn how to drive efficiently," Arnel Doria said, HCPI's VP for marketing and sales. He added, "Thus, money and gas are saved. One way to teach people with the proper driving techniques is through holding fuel eco run activities for them."

A total of 33 customer teams and four media teams trod along the moderate to heavy traffic of Balintawak (Total Balintawak), passed through road works and other obstructions in North Luzon Expressway, and made their way to Angeles (Total Angeles). Equipped with efficient driving techniques that they learned from the event's seminar, the participants were able to surmount the highway obstructions.

The campaign to promote fuel efficiency awareness was encouraged by Motolite, the official battery of Totally Amazing i-VTEC eco run, BPI/MS Insurance, Concept One Wheels, and AVT and Intelligent Car Multimedia. Through the help of ABS-CBN, Studio 23, RX 93.1, NU 107, Jam 88.3, 99.5 RT, and RMN Networks, the meaningful and exciting event was made possible.

Department of Energy Director and AAP representatives joined the event too. DOE Director Mario Marasigan highlighted the importance of conserving fuel, using an ideal car, and driving efficiently in today's petroleum crisis in his inspirational speech.

The DOE Hybrid, which was driven by Emmanuel Roborar and Gerardo Palabrica, registered 30.14 kms/li. The MT and AT official cars were driven by AAP, posting 16.85 km/l and 17.10 km/l consequently.

Aries Espinosa of the Philippine Daily Inquirer and Claudine Najera of Heart Radio registered 24.49 km/l, topping the 1.8 Civic A/T media category. Jay Ambrosio won with 22.95 km/l using M/T under the customer category and registered in Honda Cars Marikina. As for the A/T customer category, Noelito Feliciano generated an amazing record of 47.92 km/l and registered in Honda Cars Alabang (HCAL).

Participants received exclusive Honda and Total items. Cash and exciting prizes were given to the winning teams with the most fuel efficient Civic. P10,000 cash prize, Honda fully synthetic engine oil, and trophy were granted to each winning team.

Watch out for the fourth and last leg of this thrilling challenge and be amazed yourself with the 1.8 Civic's i-VTEC engine.

SHOWN, from left, are Alexine Parreño of Total Philippines Corp, MT champs Jay Ambrosio and Pinggoy Roa, Tintin Reyes of Honda Cars Philippines, and Mario Marasigan of Department of Energy. Right photo shows AT champs Noelito and Noah Feliciano.

St. Luke's forum reveals future of radiology March 30

THE FUTURE OF RADIOLOGY IN MEDICAL PRACTICE WILL take center stage as St. Luke's Medical Center Institute of Radiology holds its discussion titled "Shifting Trends Towards Clinically Oriented, System-Based, Multimodality Imaging" on March 30 at the hospital's Cathedral Heights Building Auditorium. The symposium will tackle the timely issue on the need for radiologists to move into a clinical specialization based practice rather than the current modality based scheme. This trend is already proven to be more beneficial to the patients and is the standard in hospitals in developed countries. Included in the topics for discussion are Pediatric Radiology, Neuroradiology, Virtual Bronchoscopy, Breast Imaging, Musculoskeletal Imaging, GIT Radiology, Uroradiology, Head and Neck Imaging, Cardiac Imaging and Interventional Procedures. Discounts will be given to pre-registrants. For details, interested parties can call Dr. Johanna Lagunzad at 0922-8372286 or at 726-0465 and 727-5409.

Globe gives away 2 Avanzas to promo winners

GLOBE TELECOM GAVE AWAY TWO BRAND new Toyota Avanza vehicles to the winners of its "Taktak mo? O Tatakbo?" promo. This television contest, which has been running since Jan. 22 in "Eat Bulaga" in GMA 7, is part of Globe's "Gets Mo!" promo.

In "Taktak mo? O Tatakbo?", 12 studio contestants will vie for the chance to spin the wheel that will determine his or her prize. The contestants participate in a question-and-answer elimination game until one winner is determined. The winning contestant has the option to spin the wheel three times for a chance to get a brand new Toyota Avanza or cash prizes.

A home partner is also electronically drawn to win the same prize. Globe subscribers can join the promo by answering the question of the day by sending EB [space] name [space] age [space] gender [space] address to 2344. For more information on Globe's "Gets Mo!", text GETSMO to 2222.

Shown, at left, is home partner winner Eric Paras and winning studio contestant Rosalina Espinosa (right) receiving their new vehicles from Globe. With them is Globe segment marketing head for OFW adults Cecille L. Marino.

Globe
GETS MO!
Globe
GETS MO!

Maybank gives financial aid to 'Reming' victims

MAYBANK PHILIPPINES RECENTLY MADE A donation to the Philippine National Red Cross (PNRC) to help in ongoing rehabilitation efforts for the displaced victims of Typhoon Reming in Bicol.

The donation represents a portion of Maybank employees' unused sick leave credits pledged to the bank's MaybanKalinga program, Maybank Philippines' way of continuing the tradition of the Group's involvement in bringing cheer to the less fortunate and participating in social welfare/community outreach projects, along its parent bank's activities in Malaysia.

This is the first time Maybank has tapped the Red Cross as a conduit of their donations, although in the past it has also extended aid to victims of calamities, specifically the Quezon and Aurora typhoon victims through ABS-CBN Sagip Kapamilya and the landslide victims in Guinsaugon, Southern Leyte.

Maybank is the biggest bank in Malaysia in terms of assets (over $50 billion). It is present in .key financial centers worldwide, including Shanghai, London, New York, Hong Kong, Singapore, Jakarta and Bahrain. Maybank's operations in the Philippines began in 1997 and now consist of 45 branches in Metro Manila and key provincial cities, the second largest overseas operations next to Singapore.

Maybank was recently ranked among the top performing banks in the Asia Pacific. In the 2006 edition of the Asian Banker 300, an annual ranking and survey of the largest and strongest banks in the region, Maybank was ranked 4th largest in Southeast Asia.

HANDING over the donation in behalf of Maybank is Noli Ortiz, Maybank head of corporate affairs and Deng Castro, Maybank PR and branding officer. Accepting for Red Cross is Gwendolyn Pang, PNRC Director of fund generation department.

DHL launches inaugural YES Awards

DHL, THE WORLD'S LEADING EXPRESS AND LOgistics company, has announced its nationwide search for nominees for the inaugural Young Entrepreneurs for Sustainability (YES) Awards. The YES Awards aims to identify and recognize the contributions of young social entrepreneurs who have developed new and innovative solutions and methods to meet any of the eight UN Millennium Development Goals. The application for the awards is now ongoing until March 31.

The inaugural DHL YES Awards 2007 will initially take place in five countries-Bangladesh, Pakistan, Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand. A national winner and two runners up will be identified from each of the five countries. An Asia Pacific regional winner will then be selected from the five national winners.

For more information about the DHL YES Awards, interested parties can call Ann Geleen V. Follosco at 840-1247 or 894-4868, or e-mail your inquiries to yes.awards.ph@gmail.com, or check the official website at www.dhl.com/yesawards.

PHA holds biggest BP screening in Asia-Pacific

A TOTAL OF 101,340 PARTICIpants from key cities across the nation participated in the nationwide blood pressure screening dubbed "Presyon Ko Alam Ko, Presyon Ko Alaga Ko" Feb. 11. The massive turnout made the event the biggest BP screening held in the country and is believed to be the biggest ever BP screening in the Asia-Pacific region.

The current world record in the Guinness Book is held by United Kingdom with a total of 127,573 individuals participating in the event.

Spearheaded by the Philippine Heart Association (PHA), in collaboration with the Vice Mayors League of the Philippines and Therapharma, a division of Unilab, the campaign primarily aimed to raise the awareness of Filipinos on the importance of monitoring one's blood pressure (BP).

From 7 a.m. to 12 noon, participants from the 400 identified sites nationwide gathered to the nearest blood pressure screening site to have their BP checked. Health personnel were trained by PHA members nationwide on the proper technique to check the blood pressure. The city hall of Mandaluyong served as the main satellite of the event in Metro Manila. Hyping the BP awareness campaign was Kapitan Presyon, the official campaign mascot and the newest ally of patients in fighting hypertension.

PHA vice-president and Heart Month 2007 chair Dr. Efren Vicaldo urged the public to make the fight against hypertension a top priority. Dr. Vicaldo and the other PHA officers emphasized that complications of high blood pressure can be prevented if the BP is adequately controlled. He also stressed the importance of screening one's blood pressure in detecting hypertensive patients who have no symptoms. These individuals may never suspect that they have high blood pressure. Studies show that the majority of hypertensive patients are perfectly asymptomatic and the presence of symptoms may already reflect significant damage to the vital organs such as the heart, kidney and the brain.

According to a study conducted by the PHA, cardiovascular diseases (CVD) are the top causes of death in the country, with hypertension as one of the primary causes of CVD. Regular monitoring of one's BP can help prevent heart diseases and could help stem the tide of the CVD menace.

Therapharma general manager John Dumpit advised the people to be more "BP-conscious". He also thanked the organizers of the big event for making Therapharma a partner in this great undertaking. Such project is in line with the company's commitment to help in the early detection and sustained treatment of patients with chronic cardiovascular diseases such as hypertension, diabetes and cholesterol problems.

Pama 7th GMM, forum set March 20

The Philippine Association of Management Accountants (Pama) invites the public to attend the 7th GMM and forum on "Filing Time: SEC Financials and Internal Revenue Taxes on March 20, 12 noon to 5:30 p.m. at the Legaspi Room, ground floor, Hotel Inter-Continental Manila, Ayala Center, Makati City. Luncheon speaker is lawyer Clarencia Reyes, environmental management accounting specialist who will talk on "Let's Go Environmental". The afternoon resource speakers are Ma. Gracia Casals-Diaz, Office of the General Accountant, Securities & Exchange Commission and Dr. Ruperto P. Somera, lecturer on taxation, Polytechnic University of the Philippines. The topics to be discussed are SEC Reports and Internal Revenue Taxes. For inquiries, call Raul Cruz at 812-9555 or telefax 813-2751

Sony takes center stage in HD revolution

HOMES ALL OVER THE WORLD ARE shifting to products of high-definition caliber.

This factored in the dramatic increase in Sony's sales, specifically in the 40" and above Sony Bravia TV market. "Sony owns the dominant share in the audio-visual segment, and we attribute this to the market's positive response to HD technology. Ever since we introduced HD in the Philippines, Sony has dominated the HD World, being the most trusted brand of high definition products," Hiroaki Kobayashi, Sony's president and managing director, said.

You can trust Sony to be behind every technological innovation in electronic products, and the HD Revolution is no exception. "The history of HD is the history of Sony," Arnold Balao, deputy director for home audio-video marketing, said. "We are proud to pave the way for another technology that adds excitement to the Filipino lifestyle." But it doesn't stop there, because this year Sony is bringing the HD experience in the Philippines to a new height. To meet the growing demand for HD products, Sony is launching a bigger and better HD World.

Sony is introducing an even wider variety of HD Handycam, HD Cyber-shot and Bravia television. This new HD experience offers a total solution for HD enthusiasts: snap HD, shoot HD, view HD and print HD.

Sony is taking digital photography to the next level with the introduction of HD Cyber-shot models.

"Our new line of T-series, W-series, and H-series Cyber-shot cameras incorporate Bionz technology, which enables high-speed capture of high-quality photos in HD output," Kristine Villanueva, Sony digital imaging manager, said. Bionz technology was previously only available in the Sony D-SLR Alpha100.

The new cameras are not only feature-packed, they also come in fashionably chic designs, so users can have the best of both worlds.

Sony adds four new 1080i HD Handycam models in its collection of high-definition camcorders, two AVCHD (HDR-UX7 and HDR-UX5) that record videos on 8cm DVD discs, and two HDV (HDR-HC7 and HDR-HC5) that record in MiniDV tapes. These new Handycam models are the first camcorders compliant with "x.v.Colour", the international standard for wide color space within moving images endorsed by the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC). The x.v.Colour is a color range with approximately twice that of conventional standards, allowing consumers to enjoy a much wider range of color when recording and viewing home videos.

View your HD contents with sharper images, higher quality and wider range of colors.

Only Sony can achieve this, because only the Bravia Engine PRO of Sony Bravia televisions can create 1080p resolution to enhance HD viewing. This unique full digital processor by Sony works miracles as it filters the image, enhances the contrast, smoothens the motion, strengthens the blacks, matches the colors, widens the tone range and cleans up the text, all at the same time, to deliver exceptionally fine picture details, combined with rich colors for that startling realistic effect on the screen.

Another special feature of the Sony HD World, aside from the wider range of personal AV products, is the convenient HDMI connectivity that enables high-definition audio-visual contents recorded with the HD Handycam models to be played on the Sony Bravia via a single cable.

Experience HD from content creation to editing and viewing, to attain the holistic HD lifestyle. "Only Sony has the complete range of fully compatible, future-proof, full HD products for enhanced viewing experience," said Balao. Sony's continued efforts in developing and releasing HD products to the public offers them a more comprehensive list of home and professional HD solutions to choose from.

Sony HD products will be available in Sony Squares, Digital Solutions Plazas, and Sony authorized dealers nationwide. For inquiries, call Sony's Customer Contact Center at 878-7600 or 0917-8077669, e-mail them at info.sph@ap.sony.com, or visit their website www.sony.com.ph.

INQUIRER PHOTO/RUDY ESPERAS

NOEL BAZAAR, INQUIRER TURN OVER DONATION TO AMA

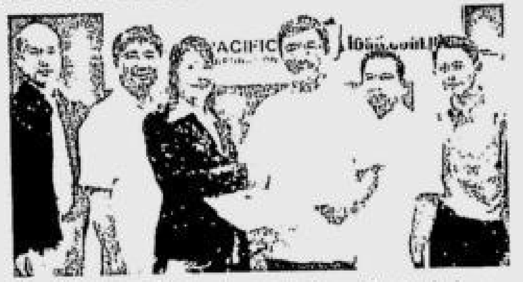
The 6th Noel Discovery Bazaar, a flagship project of Cut Unlimited Inc, in partnership with the Philippine Daily Inquirer, recently donated part of its proceeds to the Associate Missionaries of the Assumption. The annual Christmas bazaar has been supporting AMA for several years now. Other organizations benefiting from the project are the Bantayog ng mga Bayani and GMA Kapuso Foundations. Shown receiving the check from Mayose Bautista, president of Cut Unlimited Inc is Sr. Gertrude Borres, president of Assumption College. Others in the group are from left: Jocel Adorable, Inquirer AVP and marketing director; Gamay Solis, AMA executive director and Paolo Gregorio, GM of Cut Unlimited Inc. For inquiries regarding the Noel Bazaar, Cut Unlimited may be reached through tel. no. 687-0654 or e-mail noelbazaars@gmail.com.

NEW TRAFFIC OUTPOSTS FOR PARAÑAQUE

TOYOTA
THE WILL TO SERVE

Toyota Bicutan Parañaque (TBP), through the Toyota Motor Philippines Foundation (TMPF), recently donated ten traffic outposts to the 1st District of Parañaque City in support of Parañaque City's efforts to maintain the safety and cleanliness advocacy in the city. In photo during the turnover ceremonies are (from left) Carmen Flores, former president of the Parañaque City Chamber of Commerce & Industry (PqCCI); engineer Serafin Pantaleon, Toyota Motor Philippines Corp (TMP) senior vice president; Connie Zialcita-Trinos, chief-of-staff of Parañaque representative Eduardo Zialcita; lawyer Rommel Gutierrez, TMP assistant vice president; Dr. David Go, TMPF president; Simeona de Guzman, TBP executive vice president; Claudine Zialcita, wife of Rep. Eduardo Zialcita; Pete Dumana, PqCCI executive vice president; and Alex Flores, PqCCI president.

PREMIER PAYMENT SOLUTION



AspacOnline (www.aspaconline.com) signed a contract recently with Load.com.ph to provide online credit card payments for load customers. AspacOnline is a premier online payment provider in the country offering direct credit card, e-wallet and ACH payment solutions. Load.com.ph is the country's biggest pre-paid load provider. Signing the contract were AspacOnline chair Esther P. Magleo and Load.com.ph chief executive officer Joey Uy. Witnessing the signing are from left AspacOnline client relations manager Rene R. Espinosa, AspacOnline business development officer/merchant acquisition manager Austin H. Go, Load.com.ph president Erick S. Kalugdan and Load.com.ph chief financial officer Ulysses T. Lao.

COUNTRY BANKERS LIFE PAYS P1.3M IN CLAIMS

Country Bankers Life Insurance Corp (CBLIC) takes great pride in its track record of prompt and efficient claims payment in its over 40 years of service to the insuring public. Photo shows Julius Desiderio Villareal, senior vice president and director of CBLIC awarding a check worth P1.3 million to Isabel D. Abasolo, general manager of the Rural Bank of Digos, Davao del Sur in behalf of the family of the late Erasmo Tehuy. To know more about Country Bankers and the services it offers please call 523-8611.

PHILJAFA AWARDS NSO ADMINISTRATOR

NSO Administrator Carmelita N. Ericta has been selected as this year's Outstanding Japan International Cooperation Agency (Jica) Alumnus in the Field of Public Administration by the Philippine-Japan Fellows Association Inc (Philjafa). The awarding ceremony coincided with the 40th anniversary celebration of Philjafa. Administrator Ericta joins the list of past Philjafa awardees in the field of public administration from the NSO, namely, former Administrator Tomas P. Africa, former Deputy Administrator Nelia R. Marquez, and current Regional Director Dr. Salvador A. Aves of Region X.

ROBINSONS BANK INAUGURATES BONIFACIO GLOBAL CITY BRANCH

Noemi Narvaez, RSBank's cluster head for Metro South (second from left) and guest of honor Taguig City Mayor Freddie Tiñga, lead the inauguration rites of the new office of Robinsons Bank in Market! Market! Fort Bonifacio, Global City, Taguig. Narvaez said the establishment of the Bonifacio Global City branch is part of the bank's continuous expansion program 'to provide easy and convenient access and quality service to our clients'. Also in the photo is Mela Hermoso, RSBank BGC branch OIC (far left).

DERICH DIAMOND PHARMA RECOGNIZED BY PMEA

MARKETING
CELLENCE

The Philippine Marketing Excellence Awards '06 recognized Derich Diamond Pharma Inc as the Most Outstanding Slimming Coffee Distributor which was held at the Heritage Hotel Manila last Feb. 15. Photo shows (from left) Maricar Balagtas - Bb. Pilipinas Universe 2005; Rowena Gonzales, plant manager of Derich Diamond Pharma Inc; and the president of the Wholistic Healing Arts Center Jocelyn Bilasano.

APVFBI FIRE PREVENTION MONTH MOTORCADE

The New Village Volunteer Fire Prevention Unit Inc supports The Association of Philippine Volunteer Fire Brigades' motorcade in the observance of Fire Prevention Month last March 2. Shown are (second from right) NVVFPUI fire chief Sherwin Hsu Lim, APVFBI incumbent president Gerie Chua (center) and incoming president So Seng (leftmost).

Product FILES

Fits you to a tea

THE NATURAL BOUNTY OF THE EARTH. THE SERENITY of the sky. These restful, comforting qualities now come together in a new iced tea drink: Earth & Sky Lemon Iced Tea. Made from natural tea powder and lemon flavor, to give you a soothing, refreshing iced tea drink. The next time you find yourself wanting to relax, one of the best things to do is to sip a glass of iced tea. The soothing effects of tea and cool water provide that moment of peace the body and spirit thirst for. Earth & Sky is enriched with 100 percent RDA Vitamin C. And since it's made by the Coca-Cola Company, you can be sure of the quality and goodness in every glass. Try Earth & Sky Lemon Iced Tea in the new 45 gram low-calorie pack. For only P10.50, get 6 glasses of refreshingly soothing lemon iced tea.

An exquisite hotel at the gateway to the north

THE OPENING OF Kabayan Hotel-Caloocan is a welcome respite to businessmen, local officials, students, frequent viajeros in Navotas-Malabon fish trade and Balintawak's burgeoning vegetable commerce, and even to simple Provincial Based Travelers (PBT). OFWs (Overseas Filipino Workers) who are in need of budgeted yet safety and comfortable accommodation, are elated to find rooms that are just fitted for a single traveler, a family of six, or seven for groups. Another pride of Legend Hotels International, Kabayan Hotel-Caloocan is the newest 3-star hotel in addition to the Kabayan chains namely the Kabayan Hotel Pasay and Kabayan Hotel Cubao. Both Kabayan and Legend exemplify the best of Filipino hospitality - the best room in the house, home style cooking, a heart-warming smile to start the day right, Filipino to Filipino, only the best!

Addressing the dilemma of Lactose Intolerance

LACTEEZE
10 TABLETS

LACTOSE INTOLERANCE IS NOT A DISEASE. IT IS A natural consequence of aging in most people. Milk and dairy products are the reliable sources of calcium. Calcium is necessary for growth, to build stronger bones and teeth. So how can we address the dilemma of Lactose Intolerance and reap the benefits of milk and other dairy products? To fill in this need, Genasia Biotech LLC recently introduced Lacteeze Chewable Tablets in the Philippines. Exclusively available in Mercury Drug Stores, Lacteeze comes in peppermint flavor. The lactase enzymes in Lacteeze is available for up to 3 hours after chewing. For further information, call or text Lacteeze Hotline -0917-8202020.

Kostka School - tailored to learning curves of students

FOR THE PAST 18 YEARS, KOSTKA School has kept true to the Christian vision of a school that seeks to develop a child to become the best of what God wants him to be. Its grade school and high school curriculum is based on the Ateneo curriculum, but is tailored to meet the individual learning curves of their male and female students.

"We believe that every child deserves a good education. Past failures of students are not always a reason for not admitting students into Kostka because we believe in giving students a second chance," says Anita Rilloraza, co-founder of the school along with Remedios Eusebio, the late Leonida Palma, and Beatrice Rances, now in the USA. Rilloraza served as a teacher and administrator at the Ateneo Grade School for 25 years before she became co-founder and principal of Kostka School. She and her co-founders were part of the team that developed the Ateneo elementary educational programs.

Unlike the single-paced learning offered by what Rilloraza calls the "bigger schools," Kostka emphasizes "multiple intelligences" and recognizes "different learning rates."

With a student population of 500 and a maximum teacher to student ratio of 1:30, Kostka can be more flexible. The curriculum can be extended to more than ten months for students who need more time to absorb the academic discipline. It can also be enriched with more schoolwork in shorter time for students who can have an accelerated pace of learning. This flexibility goes a long way in developing a sense of achievement in the child.

Kostka School, a Catholic grade school and high school for girls and boys, has campuses in Katipunan Avenue in Quezon City and in Marikina. Call 426-0334/426-4913 (Katipunan) and 942-7881/942-7882 (Marikina) for inquiries.

P500,000 WINNER OF 'SURF PREMYO SA BULA!'

The much-coveted P500,00 grand prize of Surf Premyo sa Bula Promo went to a mother who hails from Valenzuela City. The family of Gloria Galang, a 47-year-old sales/production officer, did not expect their Christmas luck to carry over to January 2007, when they received the prize. Instructions for verification and claiming may be obtained by texting or calling (0919)649-8891 or (02)588-8800. Photo shows the winner Gloria Galang (in white shirt) with Jay Abola and the rest of the group who validated the 500K chip namely, Michelle Manalaysay and Jo Angela Perez (consumer advisory services), Jay Abola (assistant brand managers), Marie Casas (marketing), and JP Bernardo (customer development).

UNO INVADES BORACAY

The island paradise of Boracay prepares to party hard this summer as Uno gets set to invade the island's pristine shores again with an amazing line-up of events that's guaranteed to make this summer sizzle like no other! Dubbed West Urban Discovery Presents: Uno Invades Boracay, the event is scheduled on April 14 and will be held in Boracay's premiere hotspot Club Paraw, Station 1. The latest installment of 'Uno Invades Boracay' certainly promises to be more exciting than ever as it will showcase lots of fun activities that will surely trump last year's Uno event held at Zuzuni. Seen are the West Girls at Cyma Bar promoting the event.

BIT Clips

'Formulating New Products Via Blue Ocean Strategy'

"HOW TO STOP PRICE AND PROMO WAR AND EVEN make competition irrelevant" will be the output of the talk of Josiah Go, the first and only TOYM (Ten Outstanding Young Men) of the World in business education from the Philippines. His talk, entitled "Formulating New Products Via Blue Ocean Strategy" will open Mansmith and Fielders' 3rd annual Market Masters Conference on March 21, at the Ballroom of Mandarin Oriental Hotel, gathering some 300 marketing and sales practitioners all over the country. For inquiries call Alice or Gail 722-2318, 727-7142 or log on to www.mansmith.net. As in previous Mansmith Market Masters conferences, 100 percent of the proceeds will support various advocacy projects.

The Rockwell Tent hosts Fashion Week

MODELS GARBED IN THE MOST STYLISH CLOTHES BY TODAY'S HOTTEST local designers will strut the runway of The Rockwell Tent at Rockwell Center, Makati, as the chic venue plays host to Fashion Week this year from March 23 to April 1. Featuring the premiere collection of Oskar Peralta, Mich Dulce, Jojie Lloren and other elite designers, Philippine Fashion Week will showcase the latest trends and styles reflecting the global fashion industry.

Pan Asian Learning Difficulties Conference

WORDLAB SCHOOL INC, A NON-STOCK, NON-PROFIT EDUCATIONAL institution, will hold the first ever Pan Asian Learning Difficulties Conference in the Asian region with the Philippines as the chosen conference location, slated on Oct. 25-27, at the Crowne Plaza, Ortigas Ave. cor ADB Ave, Quezon City. Delving on the theme, "Learning Difficulties: An Asian Perspective," the First Pan Asian Learning Difficulties Conference aims to highlight understanding, policy and advocacy initiatives, assessment, intervention and therapy of children with learning difficulties in Asia.

MODEL HOUSES ON THE RISE

NorthPine Land, Inc has started construction of its Aspen and Birch model houses at its newest project, the Forest Ridge, subdivision in Barangay San Isidro, Antipolo City. Mayor Angelito C. Gatlabayan (2nd from left) led the unveiling of marker and groundbreaking rites highlighting NorthPine's Grand Open House held last Feb. 18 amid observance of Kung Hei Fat Choy or Chinese Lunar New Year. Joining the Mayor are NorthPine executives (from left) Orlando T. Diaz, vice president for sales and marketing; Alex C. Ojeda, assistant vice president for sales and marketing; and Rhoel B. Nolido, general manager. NorthPine, a subsidiary of the Jardine Group, specializes in the development and marketing of middle-income subdivisions.

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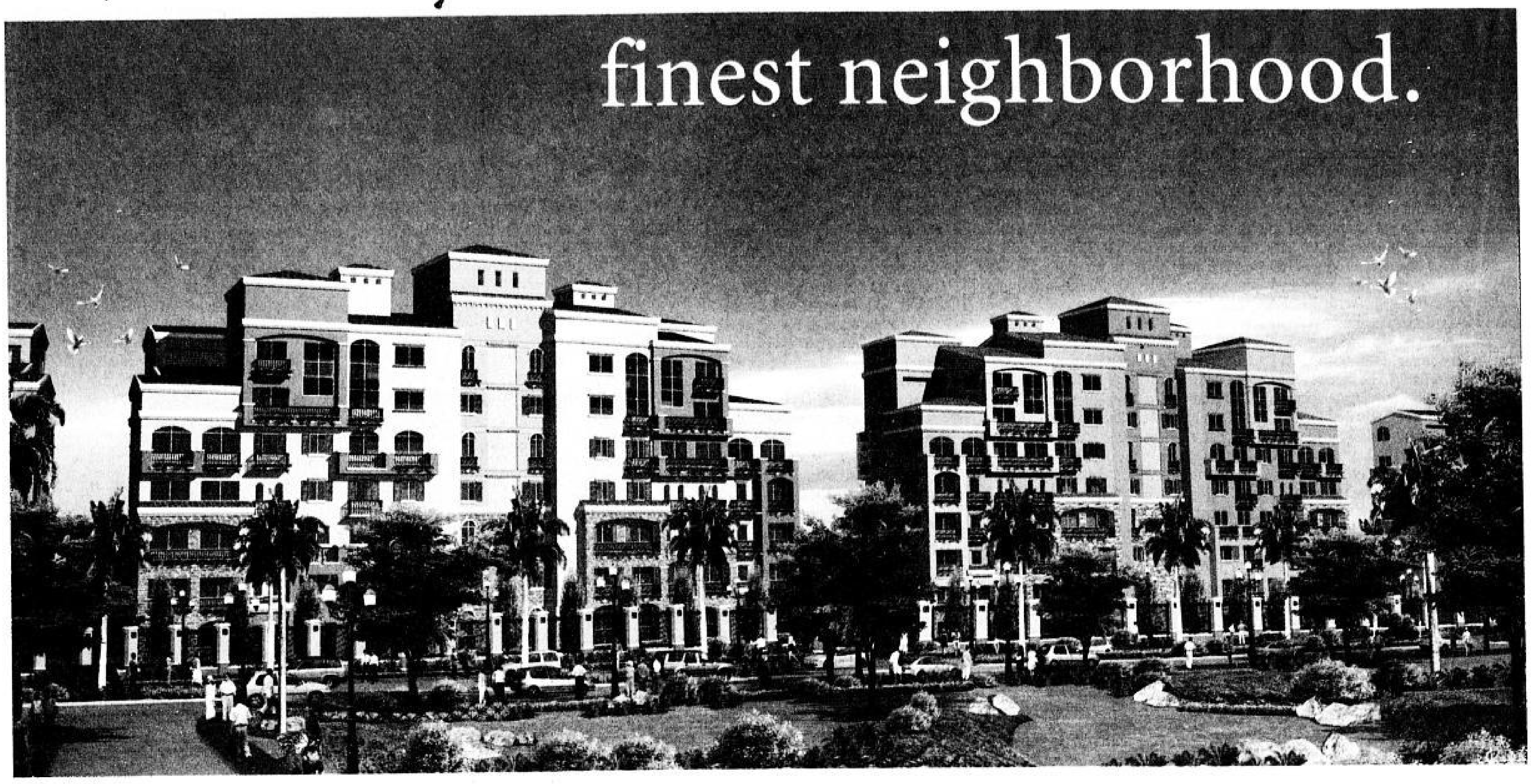

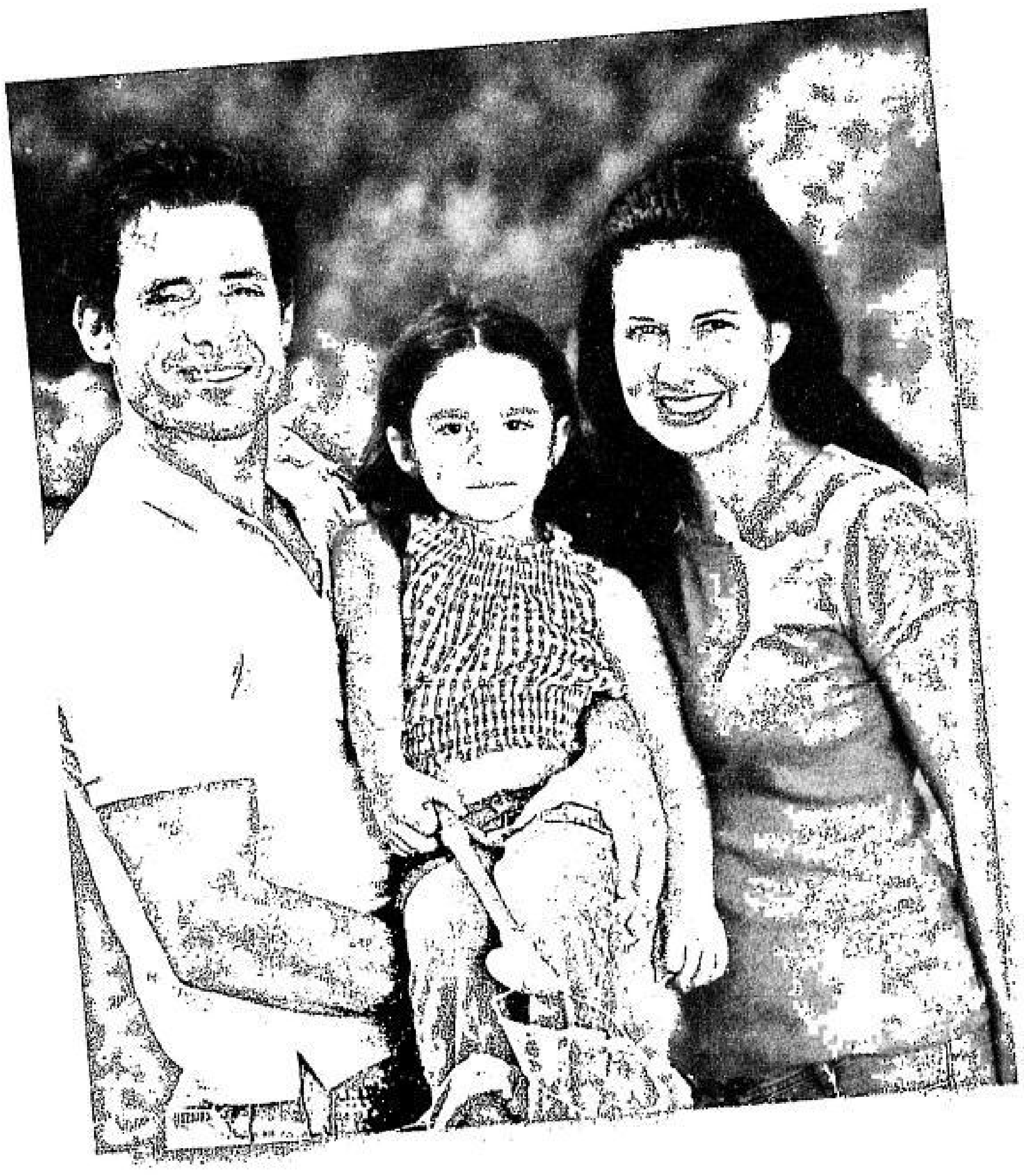

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GARDEN VILLAS
Limited Edition Residences
PHASE 2

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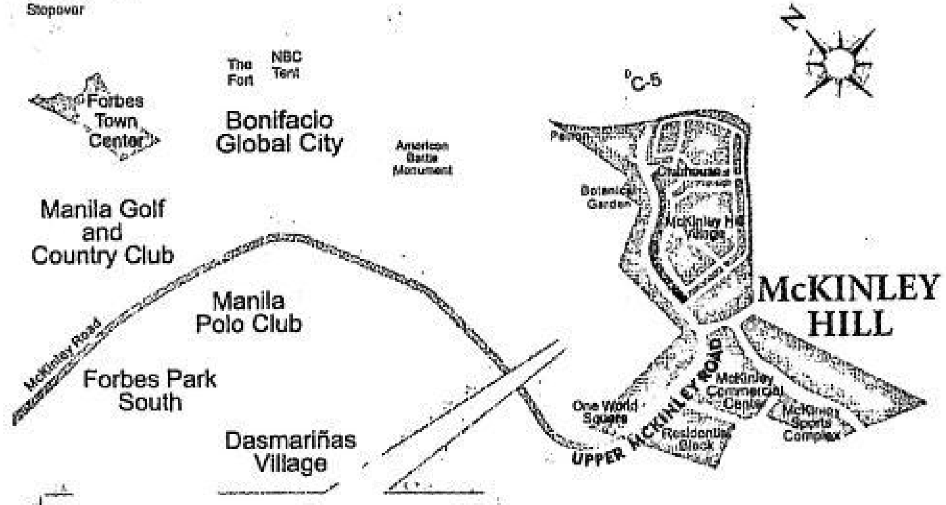
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Freedom and politicians not good for economy

Business leader traces why western democracy has been a bane to growth

By Washington SyCip
Chair, Asian Institute of Management

MOST OF EAST ASIA AND INDIA ARE off to a good start in 2007. International confidence in the region and the Philippines has greatly improved. Budget deficits are under control, interest rates are down, inflation is under control, business profits and foreign exchange reserves are up. As a result of these favorable factors and, with the weakness of the dollar, the peso, with other currencies, has strengthened.

In the Philippines, the office space requirements of "outsourcing" companies have created a boom in construction. Our GNP growth rates in 2006 were satisfactory but, as in the United States, the upper income and better educated citizens have benefited more in 2006 than the bottom group. Tokyo Electric and Marubeni, headed by two brothers, have just made the largest single Japanese investment in the Philippines—$3.4 billion in the energy industry.

For many years I have been very critical of rich western nations requiring poor nations to adopt democracy before agreeing to extend aid. Very often, expensive national elections funds could have been better spent on education. The following comments were in my article published in New York in 1979, almost 30 years ago:

"A look at the remarkable economic progress of the developing nations of East Asia will reveal that these countries have chosen to give private enterprise a chance under authoritarian governments that emphasize 'discipline.' Certain restrictions on political freedom as a trade-o ff for economic growth have been willingly accepted."

After observing the Asia setting the last 60 years, I am more than ever convinced that for poor nations with per capita income levels below $2,000 or $3,000, the western model, with its emphasis on democracy and political freedom, slows down economic growth.

I realize that emergency rule in India and Martial Law in the Philippines were failures. To take away voting rights from citizens who are used to voting for their leaders is usually not acceptable. We may therefore need a political structure that will remove major economic decisions from politicians.

Captive to politicians

Where people are hungry and illiterate, votes are sold directly or indirectly. The nation becomes captive to politicians who have to respond to those supplying the money to buy the votes. Democracy comes naturally when people are educated and income levels rise.

Economic freedom with effective enforcement of laws, sometimes not quite in accordance with western ideas of the rule of law, and long term planning for needed infrastructure has been the success story of East Asia. Political freedom gradually increased as income levels rose. The widely praised four "tiger economies" of Asia all had authoritarian governments that were able to eliminate hunger and increased spending on education. Elements of democracy came naturally with a growing middle class.

Taiwan's growth was under Martial Law and South Korea developed under a military dictatorship. Prosperous Hong Kong and Singapore do not seem to be suffering from a lack of democracy.

I want to make it clear again that I am for democracy, but food, education, housing and health care for the poor should have first priority. Both the Philippines and India are way behind in infrastructure—water, power, highways, airports, etc. India, in spite of Bangalore and Hyderabad, is way behind China in literacy rate, life span of its people, calorie intake, per capita income and any other economic indicator you can think of!

THE AUTHOR

Western model

The Philippines was once ahead of our neighbors. Now we are behind Taiwan, South Korea, Hong Kong, Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand-all of whom had not blindly followed the western model of development, which puts its emphasis on political freedom.

Vietnam's economic growth is now much admired by my American friends. They forget that this disciplined nation defeated the French and the Americans in war and still does not have a democracy.

On the other hand, Indonesia's per capita income declined after Suharto was succeeded by three weak presidents elected under a democracy praised by the west! Has western democracy been an asset or liability for poor nations in this region?

There are many other areas where Asia should not blindly follow the west. At the start of the financial crisis in 1997, Malaysia, with the strong leadership of Mahathir, was criticized for imposing capital controls while IMF, with unofficial US Treasury advice, asked Indonesia not to impose restrictions on capital movements.

Multinationals and wealthy Indonesians remitted funds abroad, prices rose rapidly, and riots caused political unrest. There is general agreement now that Mahathir was right and that IMF's advice was not the best for the largest Muslim country in the world.

While western nations and financial institutions were critical about the last military coup in Thailand, I, together with many Asian friends were glad that it took place. We saw that a coup, with the pre-approval of the king, would be bloodless and would enable the Thai government to correct many of the abuses of the Thaksin government.

Harm of hedge funds

We in Asia must now be aware of the harm that the huge hedge funds could cause our relatively small economies. Thailand's recent defensive measures were again criticized by the international financial markets. South Korea's much stronger institutions have also been affected by these funds. Recently, the Philippine government took steps to prevent one of its major industries to fall into the hands of hedge funds. I consider these funds as call girls—short-term players that come in and out whenever the price is higher.

Freedom of movement of goods, capital and information is desirable—but there are areas where developed nations have the advantage.

Should this not be accompanied by freedom of movement of people? Maybe a return to earlier days where visas and passports were unknown.

If developing nations have to pay royalties for music, movies and other ideas from the west, should we not charge developed countries for the subsidized education of nurses, doctors and teachers migrating to New York and London? (or at least require them to take over surplus lawyers and politicians!) Can fast moving economic developments be subject to the slow responses of an elected legislative body? In most countries, a central bank can react quickly to international financial changes. In nations where there is a slow-moving congress, can we not have a body of technocrats respond quickly to economic changes? We envy the ability of the Singapore government, with no significant opposition, to be able to adopt economic measures or change its policies so quickly to adjust to development inside or outside of its country.

While I strongly emphasize the need of economic freedom ahead of political freedom for developing nations, I wonder whether Europe may be losing some of its economic freedom and its competitiveness. It takes six times longer to register a company in Germany as compared to the United States. If it costs Volkswagen $250,000 to lay off a worker, does it really have freedom to respond to economic changes?

Considering the background of East Asia, should we not develop a political structure that will complement the emphasis on economic freedom? Are the Singapore and China models (or, with Japan and Korea, the chopsticks economies) applicable to the Malay countries? Malaysia, a country with a Malay Muslim majority, and significant Chinese and Indian minorities, has done well. What can we learn from them? And how do we solve the Indonesian and Philippine problems? I am quite certain that western democracy may not be the answer, but what political modifications are needed that would work in two quite different countries—one predominantly Muslim and the other with Catholic leadership? *(Edited version of keynote address during the Asian Business Conference)*

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Per DTI-NCR Permit No. 0622, Series of 2007

Yehey.com takes campaign for clean polls to cyberspace

GUILLERMO Luz (seated, second from left) made online history as the guest in the first in a series of virtual press conferences running from March 15 to May 10 on voters education, called Voters Ed @ Brewing Point.

By Tina Arceo-Dumlao

THE CAMPAIGN FOR clean, orderly and meaningful elections this May has invaded cyberspace with the launch of Voters Ed @ Brewing Point.

Hosted by www.yehey.com, the site (www.yehey.com/chat/brewing point) was conceptualized to give the public a chance to learn more about their rights and responsibilities as voters from experts in the field.

The voters' education campaign kicked off last March 15 with Guillermo Luz, former secretary general of the National Movement for Free Elections and James Jimenez, spokesperson of the Commission on Elections, as resource speakers.

The session was entitled Election 101: Introduction to the Philippine electoral system (what every voter must know) and more than 30 guests from the public and media took part in the free-wheeling discussion that ran from 10:30 am to noon.

GUILLERMO Luz of the National Movement for Free Elections

During the session, Luz enjoined the youth, especially the new voters, to go out and participate in the elections.

"A strong democracy must be based upon clean elections. It is important that everybody gets an opportunity to vote and that their vote be counted accurately," Luz said. "There are many young voters out there, particularly first-time voters, so I encourage you to go out and let your voices be heard."

Luz also suggested that when voting for senators, voters should fill in all 12 spaces on the ballot. In 2004, he said the average voter only filled out seven slots and left five spaces open.

"The problem with that is that leaving blanks makes it easier for candidates you don't like to actually win. It's a matter of arithmetic," he said.

On the observation that the youth are apathetic and apolitical, Luz said these attitudes do not contribute to nation-building.

"If we want to fix our nation and make it a better place to live in, then we should work at it. If that includes complaining, then we should do that, too. The important thing is that we should all do something. Doing nothing only keeps the status quo," Luz said.

Comelec's Jimenez added that the youth have a stake because of their strength with an estimated four million first-time voters.

"If they [youth] actually vote, then they will make a difference in the sense that the youth vote on May 14, 2007, can be the seed of a greater movement toward increased youth participation in subsequent elections," Jimenez said.

Hosted by Yehey.com in partnership with non-government organization Institute for Solidarity in Asia and editorial content provider Writers Edge Inc., Voters Ed @ Brewing Point will run every Thursday until May 10.

The March 22 session will talk about the search for a Philippine President. Other topics include: How Next Gen votes; Star struck: Dividing the thin line between acting and the serious work of nation-building; Putting a price tag on your vote; Have faith in your vote; Dynasty or sustainability? And Who's watching? Media as the people's ally in guarding votes.

Yehey.com president Donald Lim said the company sees its hosting of the online discussions on the elections as its contribution to nation building.

"We already have a traffic of 20 million a month, mostly from the youth," Lim said. "Through this, we can provide voters educated choices."

Aside from Voters Ed @ Brewing Point, yehey.com also hosts the votester.com.ph where people can learn anything and everything about the candidates seeking electoral positions in May.

"We do not need research to tell us that a majority of our youth are apathetic toward the coming elections," Lim said. "Yehey, being an online media, together with Writers Edge and ISA, would want to do our share in educating the youth about the upcoming elections, how important their one vote is and give them the proper information for them to make their discriminating choices."

"We hope that in our little way, we would help shape our country's future," Lim said.

Pacific Internet out to capture IDD minutes

By Abigail L. Ho

WITH BROADBAND PENETRATION IN the country starting to inch up, Pacific Internet Philippines Inc. aims to capture some national and international distance dialing minutes from traditional telecom carriers through its voice over Internet protocol (VoIP) services.

PacNet Philippines president Julia Theresa Yap said there was a huge potential for VoIP in the country, considering how small the market is at this time.

"VoIP usage is still very small as compared with traditional NDD and IDD, so the potential is there," Yap said. "It's a big market.

"Right now, we don't see VoIP being actively pushed. But we're very optimistic of the potential for VoIP in the Philippines. The potential is really big."

Lee Tian Yew, group vice president for voice business at PacNet Philippines parent Pacific Internet Ltd., said several factors would boost VoIP use in the country: greater broadband connectivity, expansion of local companies, and growth in the number of Filipinos working or residing overseas.

He explained that when local firms start setting up shop in countries abroad, the need to cost-effectively communicate with their branch offices becomes greater.

Also, for Filipinos with relatives and loved ones abroad, making overseas calls should not be too costly, he said.

This was why the company recently launched PacNet Vocal, a VoIP service aimed at making NDD and IDD calls easier and less costly.

Since the service is VoIP, calls don't pass through the public switch telephone network, eliminating the costs associated with traditional long-distance or overseas calls.

PacNet Vocal makes use of traditional handsets, giving subscribers the flexibility to use it even without personal computers.

All an individual needs to take advantage of cheaper NDD and IDD calls is a broadband connection, a PacNet Vocal subscription, and an Internet phone that comes bundled with the subscription.

The Vocal handset can just be plugged into any broadband line.

PacNet Philippines offers three PacNet Vocal subscription plans: Vocal Express, Vocal Advance and Vocal Business.

For Vocal Express, a user has to pay a monthly service fee of P900, which covers 125 free voice minutes and a Grandstream Budgetone handset.

For a monthly charge of P2,000, a user can choose to go for the Vocal Advance plan, which includes 300 free minutes, a Grandstream Budgetone handset, and a Vocal World Number that allows users to bypass international charges when making calls to another location.

Calls made to Vocal World Numbers only incur local call charges—as if the people from both ends of the line are just within the same city.

Users can also go for the Vocal Business plan. For a monthly fee of P5,000, a subscriber can take advantage of 1,000 free minutes, a Linksys SPA941 handset, and one Vocal World Number in the United States, Canada, France, Germany, Italy or the UK.

"People used to think of VoIP as a novel form of online communication. But the service has evolved and is fast becoming the preferred choice in conducting business communications worldwide. This world-class, business-grade service will not only benefit the community, but also help Filipino businessmen gain enhanced presence in the global market," Yap said.

Online share in advertising budgets growing

IN A WORLD WHERE ADS PUSH PEOple—whether directly or subliminally—to try out products and services, companies need to take much care in deciding where their ads should come out to ensure maximum exposure and translation into actual sales.

Companies used to divide their advertising budget among print, radio and television—all of which were considered effective advertising tools over the past several decades.

Then came billboards—really huge ones that people see on a daily basis on the entire stretch of Edsa and on many major thoroughfares in Metro Manila and even in provinces.

Now another medium is slowly creeping in to challenge traditional advertising mediums. And it's something that provides both local and international exposure.

According to Jason Coates, communications manager at Yahoo! Southeast Asia, advertisers have started to see the merits of advertising online.

"Advertisers are getting a wake-up call. With 20 million Filipinos online, a huge audience that can't be ignored, companies now need to incorporate online into their advertising campaigns," Coates said in an interview.

He said not only did online ads expand the reach of a company's products or services as these could be seen both locally and internationally, these also had a "viral" effect as Filipinos who see online ads actually discuss these with other people.

"Filipinos are naturally inquisitive and social. They talk about the ads that they see online," he said.

Yahoo! Southeast Asia director of sales Tom Sipple said that over the past few years, there had been a huge shift in ad budgets from print and traditional media to online.

He cited Chrysler as an example.

Although considered a traditional advertiser, he said Chrysler had started allocating more of its ad budget for online advertising. From 10 percent in 2005, this had grown to 18 percent in 2006 and should further increase to more than 20 percent this year.

He said the same phenomenon was starting to happen among Philippine companies, particularly those in the tourism, consumer technology and finance industries.

Mobile operator Globe Telecom Inc. and even the Department of Tourism were examples of advertisers that had started to see the benefits of online advertising, he said.

Clearly, there was a huge room for growth for online advertising by Philippine firms as the market was still very small, he said.

"In the Philippines, 12 percent of media is online, but only 1-2 percent of ad spending is being channeled online. Time spent by people online is actually much higher than the advertising dollars being spent for online ads," he said.

Apart from reach, he said one big advantage of advertising online was the fact that online ads were "measurable"—meaning, the number of times the ad was viewed could be counted, unlike with print and broadcast.

"Plus, companies who advertise online get a chance to have one-on-one engagements with their target markets. They get people to have absolute engagement with their brands," he said. *Abigail L. Ho*

Become call centers, Microsoft tells Internet cafés

By Rizalene Acac
Inquirer Mindanao

DAVAO CITY—INTERNET CAFÉS IN Mindanao could increase their revenues by becoming call centers, too.

George Parilla, Microsoft Southern Philippines marketing manager, gave this advice to Internet café operators here who have been complaining of declining revenue.

He said many Internet cafés in Luzon have already converted to this type of café operation, which was the latest trend in the business process outsourcing sector.

Internet café operators in the Visayas and Mindanao welcomed his advice as they continue to find ways to solve their problem of low revenues.

Parilla said the Internet café operators have been complaining about their difficulty recovering their investment in the business, which can be partly blamed on too many cafés serving the same market.

Parilla said Internet cafés could immediately take on call center operations because the computers usually run for only eight hours and are unproductive the rest of the day.

"When cafés are converted into call centers, the infrastructure as well as the equipment would be more utilized," Parilla said.

Parilla said Biometrix, a company that provides a platform for interested companies, charges an investment of $155 per call center seat.

Biometrix would also link the call center with prospective clients in the United States and the United Kingdom.

John Marvin Cruz, Biometrix corporate marketing director, said the key to putting up a call center company was establishing contacts.

Through its platform, he said Internet cafés could recover their investment in as early as six months.

Cruz said a client in Batangas started with just 10 seats. It now operates 30 seats and has plans to expand to 70 seats before the end of the year.

On human resources, Cruz said Biometrix could link the cafés to training schools.

Parilla said Microsoft, for its part, would help Internet cafés by introducing them to financing institutions that can help them as they add call center operations to their menu of services.

"We don't want to leave out the Internet cafés because they have a big impact on our society," he said.

He said that aside from helping Internet cafés grow their revenues, turning them into call centers would also encourage operators to use only genuine software.

Piracy of its operating systems and other software products remains one of Microsoft's biggest headaches in Asia, including the Philippines.

BY TURNING into call centers, Internet cafés can earn extra income.

Seamless communications becoming a must for managers

By Riza T. Olchondra

WHAT IF THERE WERE A PORTAL SERVing as a one-stop communication center for businesses?

Managers are increasingly turning to mobile communication such as e-mails and voice calls, but their ability to communicate while on the go remains inhibited by the lack of integration between their devices, business applications specialist Avaya Inc. said.

In response to this need, Avaya has come up with its "one-X portal," which taps an individual's cellular phone, computer and other mobile devices so that anyone in the office can contact everybody else, even when they are in different locations.

Lee Schlenger, Avaya's senior product manager for unified communications, cited a recent IDC Asia Pacific survey on business executives which said that two-thirds of managers surveyed admitted to missing an important business meeting, customer inquiry or new business opportunity by not being able to call or e-mail someone.

The survey respondents also said that providing enterprise mobility for their employees would improve bottomlines by reducing costs and raising productivity figures.

Avaya said it responded by developing a portal that enables users to contact other employees listed in a directory, send notification on events and issues to their cellular phone, and add them to a conference call. The portal can be used without having to install any new software in managers' and workers' cellular phones, computers and other devices.

Users simply have to go to a secure interface in Avaya's portal (a flash demo can be found in ww1.avaya.com/campaign/demo/one-x/portal/index.html).

There is also a capability called "Extension-to-Cellular," which allows calls to an office number to be sent to a cellular phone. Other features allow users to see, sort, play and record voicemail messages in any order or show one's availability, similar to that shown on a chat window.

For IT departments, the Avaya one-X Portal eases the technical challenges associated with enabling employees to work effectively from anywhere and the rollout of advanced communication tools to large numbers of employees.

The one-X Portal also uses various authentication systems, making sure communications are secure, regardless of whether a user is on a company-issued or a public computer.

The solution will be formally launched in various countries worldwide from April to June.

Big pharma's bitter pill: II

MAPPING THE FUTURE

By Niceto S. Poblador

WE NOTED EARLIER ("BIG PHARMA'S Bitter Pill: I") that the reason that Pfizer and other multinational drug manufacturers fail to provide access to countless potential users of their products is their high development cost.

Estimates vary widely, but it costs around a billion dollars, on the average, to successfully introduce a new drug in the market.

Total R&D budgets are staggering. Pfizer spent $7.68 billion in R&D in 2004, while both Bristol-Meyers Squibb and GlaxoSmithKline spent around $5.2 billion each.

In order to recoup and to profit from their huge investment in R&D, prices tend to be set unreasonably high, well beyond the reach of countless millions of the ailing poor in the less developed countries where public health facilities are meager or nonexistent.

Product development costs in the industry are exceedingly high due to a number of factors. We shall look at some of these, and show what is being done about them.

To the industry's credit, major players such as Pfizer, Novartis and GlaxoSmithKline have taken some initiatives to bring about long overdue changes.

Vertical dis-aggregation

Multinational pharmaceutical companies are typically huge and highly centralized organizations where major activities such as R&D, manufacturing and distribution are all done in-house.

Essentially, the same model applies to product development where drugs are developed from the ground up employing company personnel and using company-owned resources and proprietary knowledge.

A major reason for this approach to product innovation is the long-standing tradition among drug manufacturing companies to zealously guard their intellectual property rights and to be secretive about their internal operations.

A number of drug manufacturing firms have now started to dis-aggregate their operations by outsourcing some of their product-development activities to a large number of start-up biotech firms and drug developers as well as to university-based research units and medical centers.

Aside from saving on development cost, networking creates value from synergies arising from complementation and from what are known as "network externalities."

If this trend continues, time will come when new drugs will be developed with increasing frequency and at substantially lower costs, eventually resulting in lower prices and increased availability.

Collaborative strategies

Drug manufacturing companies are known to keep their cards close to their chests. Each company owns thousands of patents to chemical substances and processes that are of little value by themselves but are potentially priceless when combined with complementary materials and production or experimental procedures found elsewhere.

In the realm of infotech, venerable IBM recently surprised everyone by deciding to opensource over half a billion dollars' worth of patents with other IT players.

The reasoning, simply put, is that this will result in greater value all around for everybody to share. Many drug-manufacturing firms are beginning to appreciate the value of collaborative strategies.

Pfizer, for one, has moved in this direction by setting up small, relatively self-contained units with a mandate to work closely with biotech firms in developing drugs, some of which may potentially compete with those being developed in-house.

Under the prodding of its new CEO, the company has openly declared on the Internet its desire to pursue such a collaborative strategy. A new era of open-sourcing seems to have dawned on the industry!

Personalized medicine

Yet another promising development is the shift toward personalized medicine, an emerging trend made possible by developments in biotechnology, particularly genetics and pharmacogenomics.

Recent discoveries in these fields now make it possible to determine drug response among patients through their unique genetic composition.

Here in the Philippines, for example, Unilab is doing research to determine how genetic variations among Filipino patients may affect their responsiveness to anti-cholesterol treatments.

By "customizing" drugs to suit the specific requirements of patients, it will no longer be necessary to develop one-size-fits-all blockbuster drugs. The resulting reduction in developmental costs will invariably benefit all drug users through lower prices.

This will also lead to a much more focused sales effort, and preclude the need for large armies of sales persons for detail in medical clinics.

Given the time for these trends to work themselves out, the days of expensive, inaccessible drugs may soon be over. So too may industry bashing and ugly name-calling come to an end.

(The article reflects the personal opinion of the author and does not reflect the official stand of the Management Association of the Philippines. The author is an active academic and a knowledge management consultant. He is the author of the book "STRATEGY deMYTHicized: Why Today's Business Models Fail to Deliver." Feedback at mapsec@globenet.com.ph)

MOVEMENTS

Philips Philippines names new CEO

GONZALES

PHILIPS ASIA PACIFIC ANNOUNCED THE appointment of Rico A. Gonzales as Philips Philippines new country manager and chief executive officer.

Gonzales, a seasoned Philips executive, commenced his career in the company in 2001 as a sales and marketing officer for Philips Lighting Asean assigned to initiate major changes in the division's distribution strategy.

In 2002, he moved up to channel marketing director for Asean and charged with overseeing channel development managers for the various distribution channels across the region.

In 2004, Gonzales joined Philips Lighting Singapore as general manager and also briefly managed Philips Lighting Malaysia's operations.

As country manager and CEO for Philips Philippines, Gonzales is responsible for overall corporate operations in the country and concurrently holds general manager positions for the consumer electronics as well as domestic appliance and personal care product divisions. He succeeds Menardo "Med" Mateo who retired from Philips Philippines in January 2007.

Standard Chartered has new CFO

JAIN

UK-BASED Standard Chartered Bank announced the appointment of Ashish Jain as chief financial officer–SCB Philippines.

Before his Philippine post, Ashish held different posts in other Standard Chartered Bank branches such as senior manager for finance systems and senior business analyst in Standard Chartered Singapore and senior manager for global markets business finance and manager for financial accounting in Standard Chartered India.

Prior to Standard Chartered, Ashish was connected with Ernst & Young and Price Waterhouse Coopers based in Bahrain and India, respectively.

Ashish obtained his Bachelor's Degree in Commerce from Central School in New Delhi and is a Fellow of Chartered Accountants of India.

An Indian national, Ashish is married with two children.

Insular promotes executives

INSULAR LIFE chairman of the board and CEO Vicente R. Ayllón announced the promotion of three executives to the rank of assistant vice president: Cesar Y. Salera, Lorenzo Luis B. Gallardo II and Ma. Sandra J. Bustos.

Salera is the head of the company's legal unit, and the assistant corporate secretary of Insular Life and its subsidiaries: Home Credit Mutual Building and Loan Association, Insular Life Property Holdings Inc., and the ILAC General Agency Inc. He is an associate of Insurance Regulation and Compliance, given by the Life Office Management Association (Loma), and an associate of the International Claims Association. He is also a former president of the Life Insurance Claims Association of the Philippines. He obtained his BA in Political Science and his Bachelor of Laws from the University of the Philippines in Diliman. He is a member of the Integrated Bar of the Philippines.

Gallardo is the head of the corporate accounts department (CAD). He is an associate in Customer Service, and Insurance Agency Administration, and a Fellow of the Life Institute Management, all given by Loma. He obtained his Bachelor of Arts degree from the Divine Word College, and his Master of Business Administration degree from the De La Salle University.

Bustos heads the company's agency training and development staff. She obtained her Bachelor in Elementary Education, magna cum laude, and Master of Arts in Education, major in Administration and Supervision from Tarlac State University. She is a fellow of the Life Management Institute, and the Life Underwriter's Training Council. She is also a registered financial consultant.

Laundry business talk set

THERE IS CLEAN CASH TO BE derived from dirty laundry.

Learn how to start and run a laundry shop.

The Golden Treasure Skills and Development Program will conduct a two-day seminar on laundry business operations at the Vermont Blooms Unlimited at 9 Anonas Raod, Project 3, Quezon City on March 24 to 25 from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Topics to be discussed are introduction to the laundry business; basic types of services; types and setup of laundry shops; equipment; workflows; factors to consider in opening the business; marketing strategies; client liability; staffing and organization; and basic shop layout.

Lectures will include characteristics of water needed; sorting; the washroom formula; stain removal; introduction to dry cleaning, dry cleaning procedures.

For questions call 436-78-26; 952-29-34; 951-29-66 and 913-65-51

28 years of responsible corporate citizenship

CORPORATE CITIZENSHIP IS NOT JUST about improving the bottom line or earning goodwill from the community. It is about raising the bar on the practice of corporate social responsibility and helping make business work for the welfare of society. It is about making a meaningful difference in the lives of our people and empowering them to achieve their potential.

George SK Ty, founder of Metrobank and chairman of the Metrobank Group of Companies, was very clear with the direction he wanted to take in corporate social responsibility. He believed that every private corporation had responsibilities—the more successful the corporation, the greater the responsibility to the community.

"Our greatest motivation for striving to be the best in the business field is the generation of more resources to share with society whose support is responsible for our success," according to Ty. The foundation has had one of the largest endowments in the country.

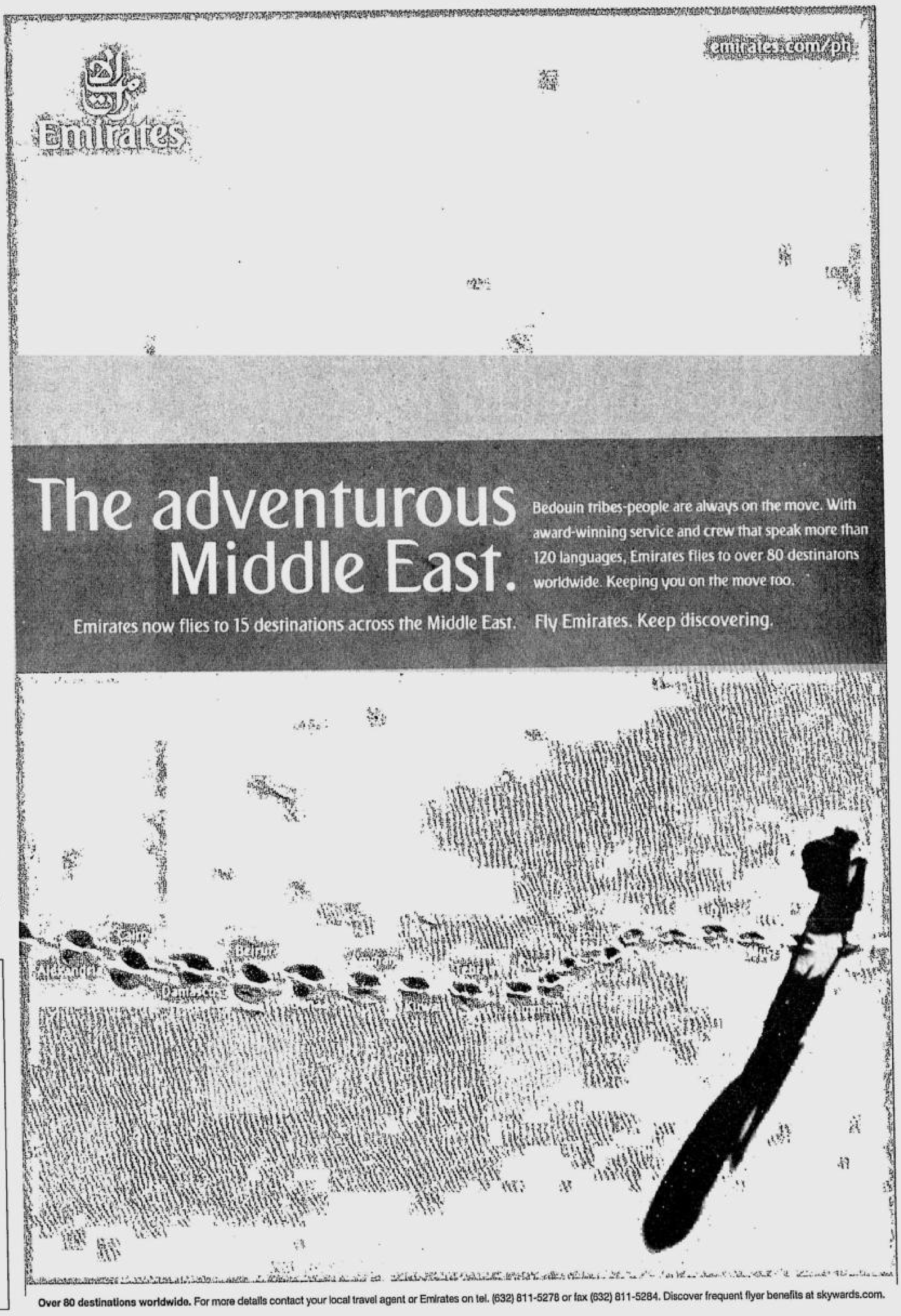
Metrobank Foundation pursued projects that heeded the call of the times. Searching for heroes among ordinary Filipinos led to the establishment of the Search for Outstanding Teachers, the Metrobank Art and Design Excellence, the Country's Outstanding Policemen in Service, The Outstanding Philippine Soldiers, Metrobank Math Challenge, and the College Scholarship Program.

Twenty-eight years later, the foundation continues to celebrate the best in the Filipino.

"Because we have always aimed for excellence in ourselves, we have also put a premium on recognizing the same quality in other members of society. After all, our nation can only move forward if we aim and work for the very best," Ty espouses.

The foundation plays a substantive role in healthcare through the Manila Doctors Hospital and the Manila Doctor's College.

After 28 years, Ty has set out to accomplish his most important task by sharing the benefits of a lifelong success, "The foundation's good works are a reflection of my love for this country," he says. He was recently named Management Man of the Year. 2006 by the Management Association of the Philippines.



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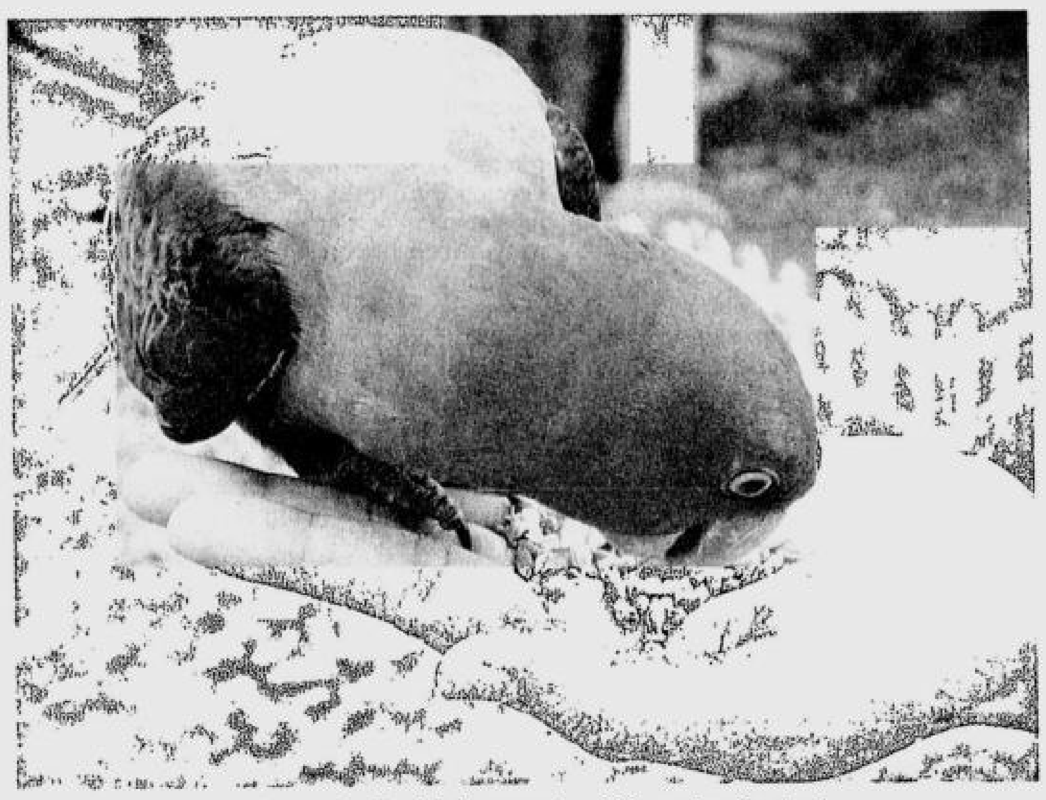

FROM birds in carton boxes the Opol Aviary now has 200 species of animals.

From water to birds

Rafting pioneer creates aviary

By Joselle Badilla
Inquirer Mindanao Bureau

OPOL, MISAMIS ORIENTAL—RUPERT Domingo and friends introduced wild water rafting in Cagayan de Oro City in June 1995.

Locals embraced the new sports adventure and became a word of mouth among locals and tourists.

In 1999, four years after being touted as pioneers in the wild water rafting business, Domingo, 44, ventured into collecting lovebirds.

"My parents have a 2,000-sq.m. lot in Taboc in Opol. The place hasn't been industrially maximized so we put up a nipa hut there and that was where I placed the birds. It became our place to unwind," he says.

He says it was just experimental, with "bird cages made of used billboards then."

Then the word spread out, close friends and rafting buddies became eager to see his bird collection.

"From one group of friends to another, they visit the place in Opol, especially after a few runs from water rafting," he adds.

This helped him come up with an idea of developing the area for public viewing.

With the creation of an aviary, he hoped that birds and its environs would be appreciated by people.

Today, Opol Aviary, the only one in Misamis Oriental, welcomes children and adults from nearby towns.

"Visitors in the aviary are mostly students and guided by their teachers. Dropping by at the aviary becomes an activity during out-of-school exposures. Some visitors are backpackers and travelers going to Iligan City," he says.

The aviary, which houses more than 200 species of animals like birds, rabbits, fish and deer. It does not get any financial support from the government.

In October 2005, the family poured out P800,000 to put up a high beam for its 25-feet aviary.

"This is entirely at our own expense and providing for the maintenance including sanitation. Birds and other animals are once a month inspected by the city's veterinarian. Other than that, we also pay the personnel manning the aviary," Domingo says.

Opol Aviary collects P30 entrance fee for adults and P20 for kids.

"And I think this is the only aviary in the Philippines where senior citizens get a free tour," he says.

How to get there

The aviary is about 9 kilometers from Cagayan de Oro City. Take a jeepney that plies the route El Salvador or Opol from Bulua terminal. Tell the driver you're going to the Opol Aviary. Roundtrip jeepney fare would cost about P30.

If you want an air-conditioned ride, take a taxi from the city. One-way fare would cost you around P100. For reservations, call (088) 8571270.

Motoring fans await RP car

By Ronnel W. Domingo

DOMESTIC AUTO PARTS MAKERS WHO are pushing for a renewed national vehicle program had delayed the unveiling of their prototype unit, which is keeping motoring enthusiasts guessing about what it looks like.

According to the Motor Vehicle Parts Manufacturers Association of the Philippines, the prototype—originally slated for introduction this month—was "already finished" but that it would be launched in early April.

Since MVPMAP broached the idea last year, vehicle patrons have been keeping tabs on the prototype project.

In one thread of conversation in the www.tsikot.com forum, members have expressed both excitement and cynicism about the campaign to convince the government to support a so-called Philippine Utility Vehicle through a package of incentives that would encourage companies to participate in the program.

The enthusiasts were initially intrigued, and with the suspense about the much-touted prototype, could not resist making their own ideas.

One member who goes by the name 'drey' said those who were developing the PhUV should make the vehicle with "no power windows, no power door locks, no power antenna, no power tail gate, just power steering."

"No high-end safety features...but it should be equipped with three-point ELR seat belts, and crumple zones or a very rugged front nose/hood, *Basta may* Passive Safety *lahat*," drey said.

Also, "the PhUV should have quality and durability since it would be used for business on weekdays and for family use on weekends. The roof should be tough."

Further suggestions were for the PhUV to make single cabs to compete with L300 FB, L300 Pickups and Multicabs.

Another enthusiast, oldblue, had misgivings, saying the "rumored" PhUV was too good to be true.

A tsikot.com member called gearspeed suggested that the PhUV should be named "Electron," and that variants should be called Systeco, GTSi, GTS, GSi, Suprema and SS50.

MVPMAP director Ferdinand Raquel Santos said such discussions were a solid testament that many people were now clamoring for a locally-designed vehicle that could cater to the special needs of Filipinos.

"They want a vehicle that is worthy to sport a Pinoy badge and in the process help uplift the Philippine auto industry," Raquel Santos said. "Thanks to the Internet, we have successfully communicated this message across a broader spectrum of the population."

Another firm, Francisco Motors Corp. has expressed interest in reviving the national car program, and announced last month that is was developing its own prototype.

Enthusiasts have expressed impatience on catching a glimpse of the PhUV.

"*Baka may* spy photos *na kayo diyan i*-share *nyo naman* (If you have spy photos of the PhUV, please share,)" syuryuken said.

Oyil, another tsikot.com member, posted pictures of van-like vehicles which he said was his guess on what the PhUV would look like.

But syuryuken said locally made vehicles in Nueva Ecija and Pampanga looked better.

"Who lives near the FMC (Francisco Motors) plant? *Baka nakaparada na yan dun sa malawak na damuhan sa likuran nung planta nila* (Maybe it is already parked somewhere in their grassy lot at the back)," oyil said.

Some said the PhUV was not worth the time and money since the proponents said it would be made of completely knocked down kits from abroad, which was a step backward from what assemblers of mostly local parts were already doing. Others said they expected the prototype to have minimal safety feautes, if at all.

But a member named CVT defended the PhUV: "We have to start somewhere. I will support this!"

"If I have the money, *kahit panget pa ito ay bibilihin ko pa rin* (I'll still buy even if its ugly)," said kikkoman.

Still another member, Galactus, said he would not think about buying if the PhUV would look like the Ford Fiera.

"To buy it just simply because it's a Philippine-made car would be wrong," Galactus said. "There should be quality and value."

"We have to show that the Philippine automotive market is a buyer's market (and not the other way around)," Galactus added. "That is, we are discriminating consumers, too."

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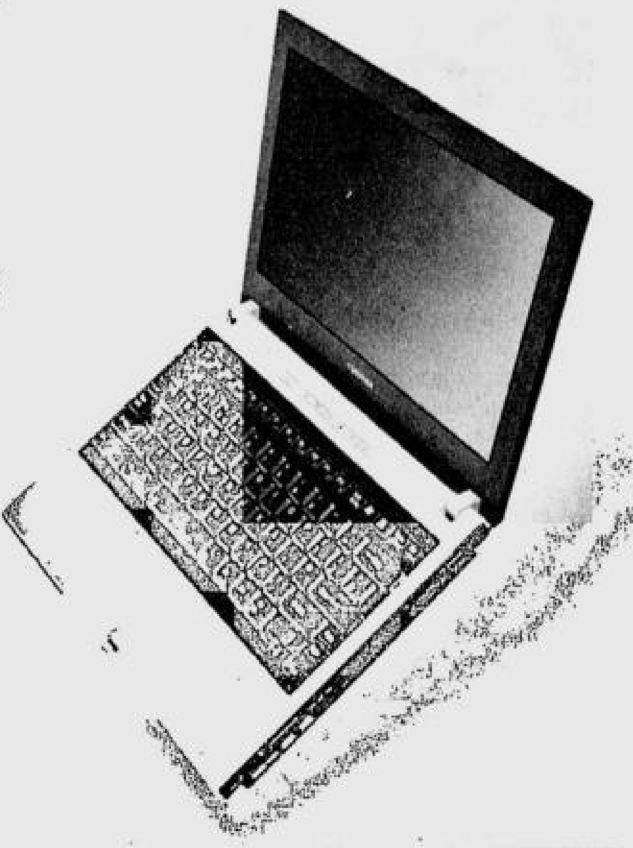

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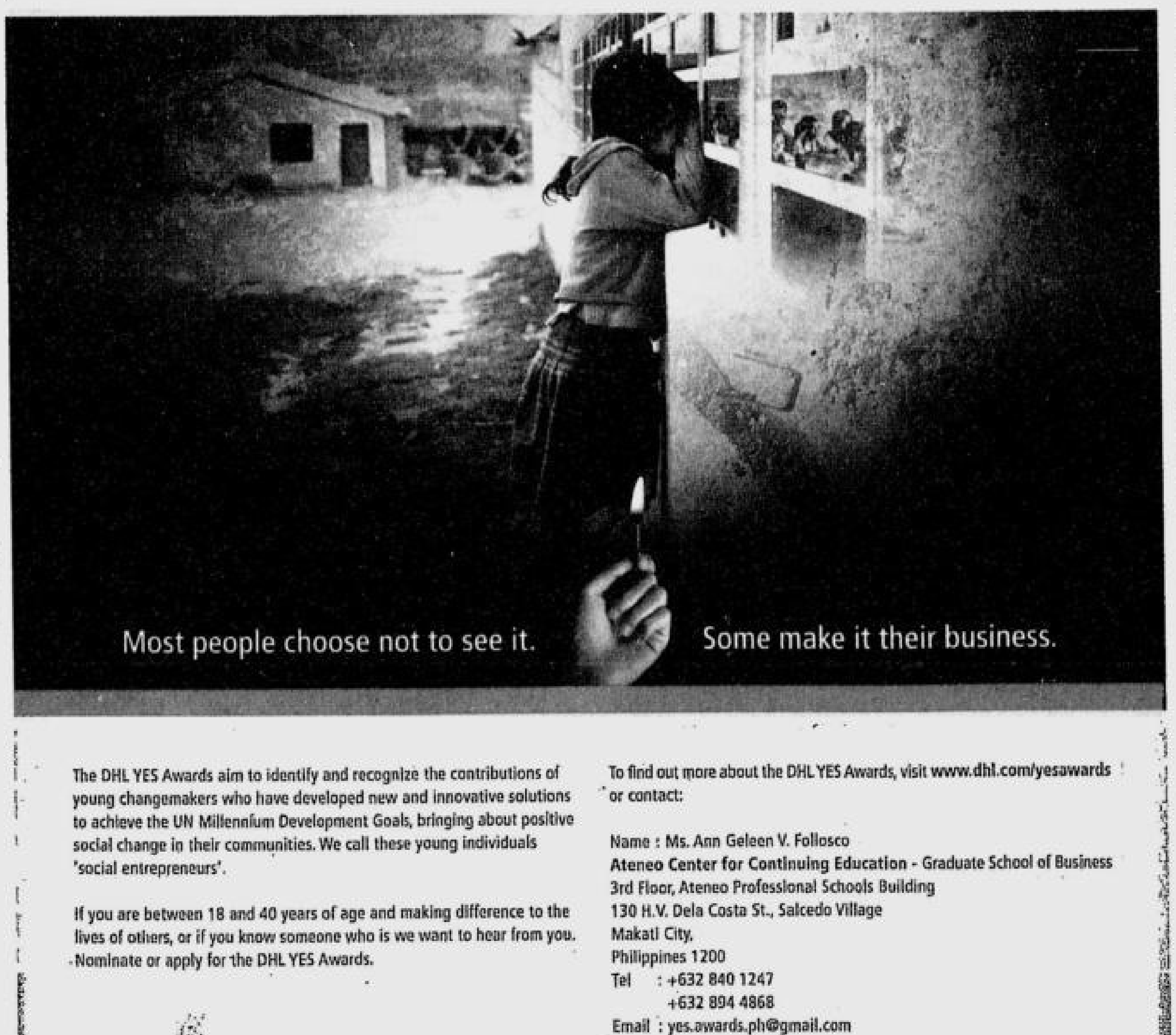
DHL YOUNG ENTREPRENEURS FOR SUSTAINABILITY (YES) AWARDS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The DHL YES Awards aim to identify and recognize the contributions of young changemakers who have developed new and innovative solutions to achieve the UN Millennium Development Goals, bringing about positive social change in their communities. We call these young individuals 'social entrepreneurs'.

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To find out more about the DHL YES Awards, visit www.dhl.com/yesawards or contact:

Name : Ms. Ann Geleen V. Follosco
Ateneo Center for Continuing Education - Graduate School of Business
3rd Floor, Ateneo Professional Schools Building
130 H.V. Dela Costa St., Salcedo Village
Makati City,
Philippines 1200
Tel : +632 840 1247
+632 894 4868
Email : yes.awards.ph@gmail.com

Opening date : 1st Feb 2007
Closing date : 31st Mar 2007
Extension date : 30th Apr 2007

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Pinoy exorcist bares how devil works /E4

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LIFESTYLE
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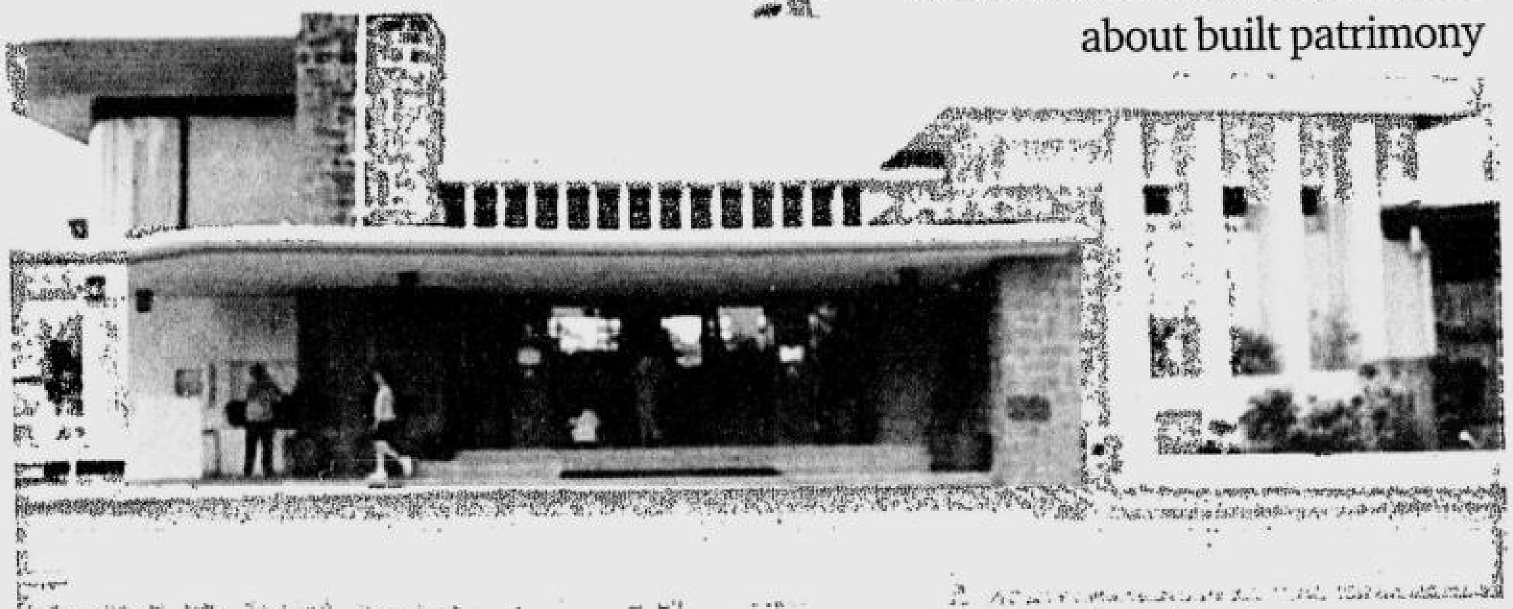
PRIDE OF PLACE
Augusto Villalon

Monumental legacy

The Architectural Legacy of Philippine National Artists seeks to memorialize landmarks and raise awareness about built patrimony


PABLO Antonio's Manila Polo Club has well-designed structural elements. Its extensive use of wood and adobe infuses personal warmth into the tropical building designed along the Art Deco style.

THE MANILA POLO Club in Makati, a heritage structure completed in 1950 by National Artist Pablo Antonio, was recently bestowed a marker by the Architectural Legacy of Philippine National Artists.

During the simple recognition ceremonies, architect Pablo Antonio Jr., representing the late National Artist's family, expressed his "profound gratitude to the officers and management of the Manila Polo Club for their tireless efforts in preserving this club."

Antonio Jr. echoed the rationale for the Architectural Legacy of Philippine National Artists program that seeks to recognize the unappreciated excellence of Philippine architecture while demonstrating that heritage structures built over 50 years ago deserve to continue living, to be reused and updated to render them more relevant to today's way of life, and that the original architectural design and character of the building should be maintained.

In recognition of greatness in Philippine architecture, four institutions are collaborating in the Architectural Legacy of Philippine Nation-

MONUMENTAL/ C2

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Monumental legacy

From page C1

al Artists program that documents the work of outstanding architects Juan Nakpil, Pablo Antonio, Leandro Locsin and Ildefonso Santos.

As a first phase of the program, commemorative markers are in the process of being installed in 12 surviving works of the National Artists for Architecture although full documentation has been completed for all National Artists' works.

The participating national institutions are the Cultural Center of the Philippines and the National Commission for Culture and the Arts.

In the spirit of professional cooperation, the United Architects of the Philippines, together with the Philippine Institute of Architects, conceptualized the Philippine Architectural Archives Program, the basis of the present Architectural Legacy program.

Boysen Paints is the project's construction industry partner.

Nakpil, Antonio

Among the initial 12 structures are Quezon Institute in Quezon City (1938), Quezon Hall at UP Diliman (1950) and San Carlos Seminary in Makati (1953) by Juan Nakpil.

Juan Felipe Nakpil (1899-1986) was born in Quiapo, Manila. Son of musician Julio Nakpil (composer of Katipunan hymns) and Gregoria de Jesus (widow of Andres Bonifacio), he obtained his Diploma in Architecture from the Fontainebleau School of Fine Arts in Paris and received his Master in Architecture degree from Harvard University. He founded the Philippine Architects Society in 1933 and is considered the Dean of Filipino Architects.

He was the first architect named National Artist in 1973 "for his outstanding talents and services in creating edifices, both private and public, that are conceptually well-designed and conscientiously executed."

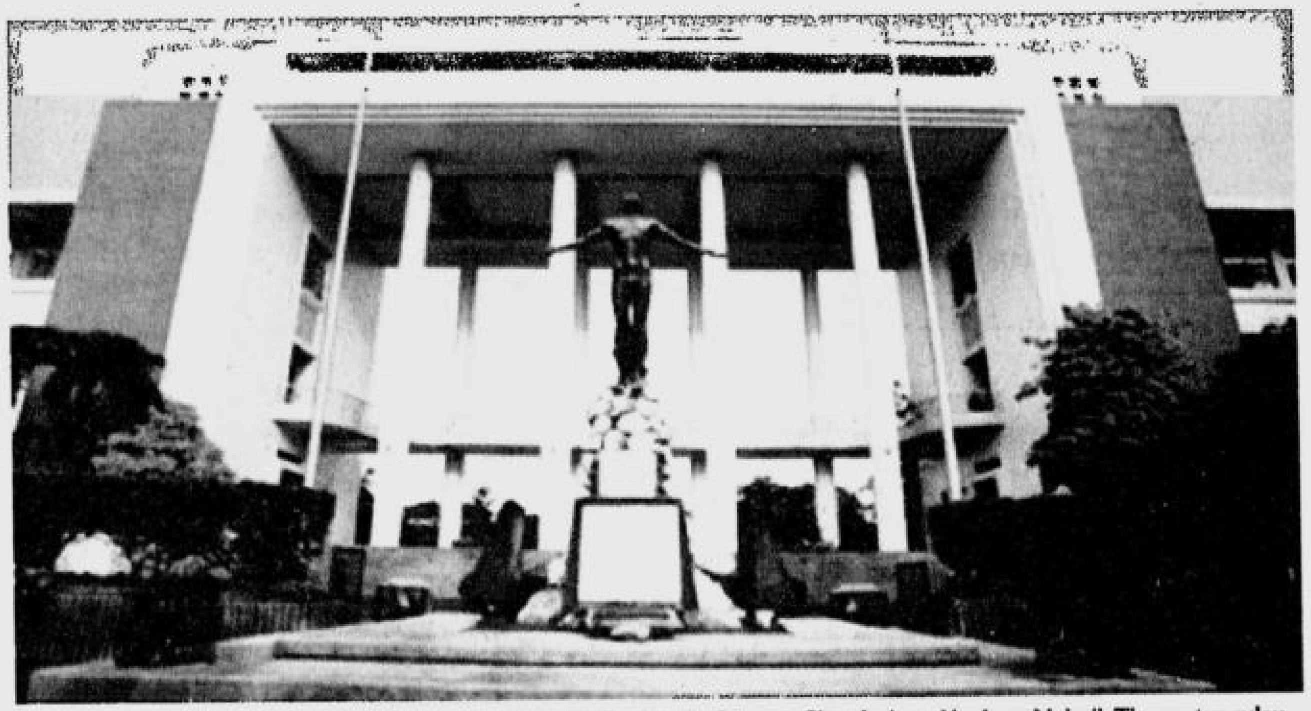
Works by Pablo Antonio to receive markers are the Far Eastern University campus in Manila (1938-50), White Cross Sanatorium in San Juan (1938) and the Manila Polo Club in Makati (1950).

Born in Binondo, Manila, Pablo Sebero Antonio (1902-75) began his architectural studies at Mapúa Institute of Technology and completed his degree at University of London in 1927.

Clean lines, plain surfaces and bold rectangular masses characterize Antonio's buildings, a radical departure from the traditionalist and academic style of the period leading to his reputation as the foremost modernist architect of his time.

He was the second architect bestowed National Artist status (1976) "for his unique creations and distinct contribution to Philippine architecture and to the developing culture of the nation."

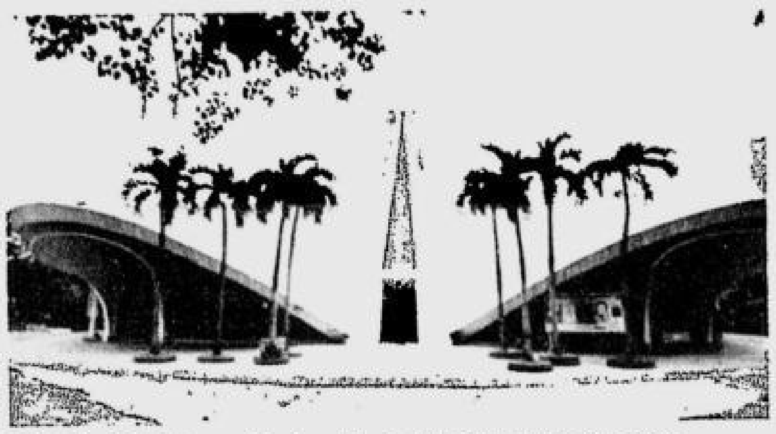
Leandro Locsin is honored for the Church of the Holy Sacrifice at UP Diliman (1955), the Church of Saint Andrew in Makati (1968) and the Philippine International Convention Center in Pasay City (1975).



ADMINISTRATION building of the University of the Philippines in Quezon City, designed by Juan Nakpil. The rectangular structure is reflective of the UP Manila campus of 1908. The Manuel L. Quezon Hall is highlighted with a central colonnaded porch as an idiom of modernism accentuated by an Art Deco detail characteristic of many of Nakpil's work.

Locsin, Santos

Leandro Valencia Locsin (1928-95), born in Silay, Negros Occidental, in 1928, completed his architecture studies at University of Santo Tomas in Manila.



BUILT in 1968, the parish church in Bel-Air, Makati, designed by Leandro Locsin, is symbolic of the manner the martyr died—crucified on X-shaped cross. The butterfly-shaped floor plan emanates from this cruciform. Many other symbolic features mark the tent-like structure, including the giant chandelier over the altar which serves as a halo over the copper cross by another National Artist, Vicente Manansala.

As seen in his Cultural Center of the Philippines and Philippine International Convention Center, Locsin floats architectural volumes that capture the visual lightness characteristic of Philippine architecture.

His significant contributions in the search of Philippine identity in design led to his being proclaimed National Artist in 1990 in acknowledgement of "his triumph in combining in a forceful and dramatic fashion the precision of engineering technology with the principles of aesthetics."

Among the achievements of Ildefonso Santos awarded commemorative markers are the landscape architecture of Paco Park (1963) and "Martyrdom of José Rizal" at Rizal Park (1989).

Santos (1929-) was born in Malabon, Rizal, holds a BA in Architecture from University of Santo Tomas and University of Southern California.

He established the Philippine Association of Landscape Architects and headed the graduate program of tropical landscape architecture at University of the Philippines. He was elevated to National Artist in 2006 for his "...work in the development of landscape architecture in the Philippines."

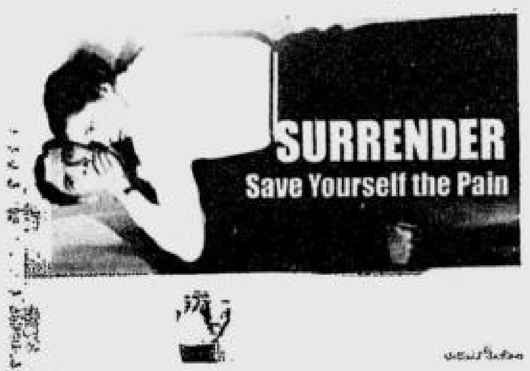
The Architectural Legacy program is a commendable first step in establishing the public awareness that heritage buildings are to be respected and should remain in use since they definitely serve a need in our contemporary lifestyle.

Pushing aside the stereotype that to be considered heritage a structure must date to the Spanish colonial era, this program expands the idea of heritage to rightfully include more recent structures dating from the American colonial period, ranging through the early days of Philippine Independence, and all the way to the late 1970s.

Sadly, the commemorative plaques do not guarantee preservation of the buildings.

Feedback is welcome at pride.place-@gmail.com

'Homonyms of Recent History' at Ricco-Renzo



Cesare Syjuco's 'hybrid art' combines the visual and the literary

You are leaving

talk about the Anti-Christ,

ARTS ICONOCLAST CESARE A.X. SYJUCO will open his latest exhibition, "Homonyms of Recent History," at Ricco-Renzo Gallery in Makati.

Curated by Jean Marie Syjuco, the exhibition opens March 22, with late-evening poetry performances at 9 p.m. The exhibit will be on view until April 30.

Syjuco, a recipient of the TOYM, has won praises for his new experimental "hybrid" works which fuse literature and the visual arts. Alfred Yuson has called him the "Radical Renaissance Man."

In a recent review, Angelo V. Suarez noted that Syjuco accomplishes this difficult juggling of disciplines "like a true master... at the same time playful and with effortless grace."

Eliseo Madriaga took note of Syjuco's "legendary prowess as poet, painter and critic... a triple-edged talent unrivaled in this country for his intelligence, depth, scope and daring."

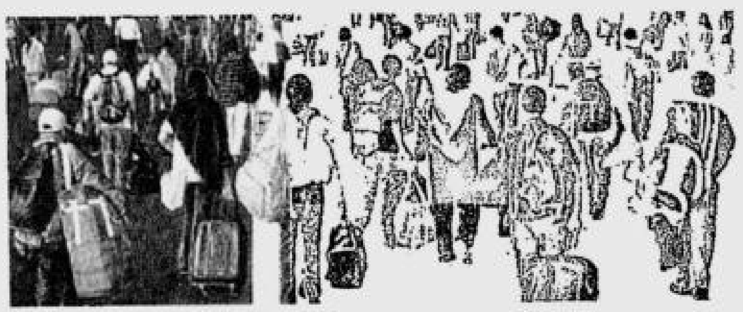
Noting that Syjuco has been "stretching the boundaries of language" since his student days, Cirilo F. Bautista wrote that Syjuco "has the advantage of perceiving things with uncanny, sharp perspectives... presenting the viewers with a new system of comprehending reality. A new art utterance emerges, utilizing puns, double plays, paradoxes, graphic descriptions, and metaphors...

"Viewers cannot escape the ensuing delectation... They are struck between the eyes, as it were. And this is a characteristic of Cesare's avant-gardism. He disposes with your neutrality, luring you to make a stand where otherwise you would be just an observer. His picture-words are meant to disarm you, to jar you into the realization that there is much more than the usual literalness that resides in them."

Ricco-Renzo is located at LRI Business Plaza, 210 Nicanor Garcia St., Bel-Air 2, Makati City. Call 8982542/43/45. Visit www.cesaresyjuco.com.

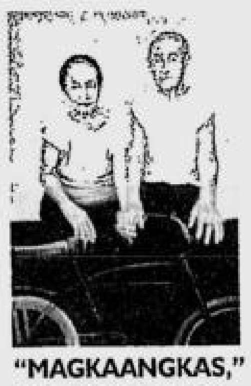
AN EXHIBITION of a new collection of paintings and illustrations by Arnel Mirasol opened last week in The Crucible Gallery at SM Megamall. Cutting the ceremonial ribbon are Romy San Agustin, Mirasol, Lina San Agustin, Reni Roxas, publisher of Tahanan Books; and Isagani Yambot, INQUIRER publisher. The solo show runs until March 25.

VISUAL ARTS

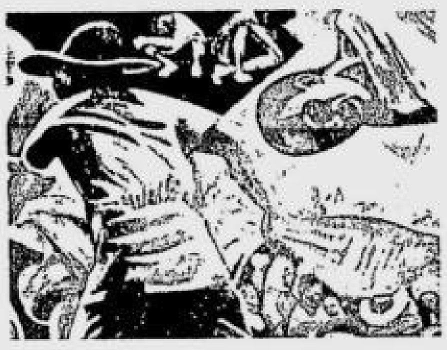


"DIASPORA," by Antipas Delotavo

SR artists at Finale



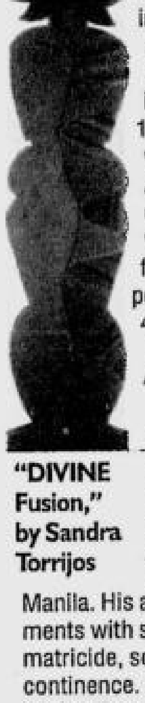
"MAGKAANGKAS," by Renato Habulan



"OPLAN Tumba," by Pablo Baen Santos

Amid the passage of the Anti-Terrorist Law and the national election campaign, to be mounted is "3Anggulo," opening the SM Art Center (4/F, SM Megamall A) on March 14. Organized by Finale Art File and curated by José Tence Ruiz, the show reunites the three biggest names of social realism: Pablo Baen Santos, Antipas Delotavo and Renato Habulan. Known as the seminal figures who incorporate a decidedly social and political bent to their works, beginning in the '70s in the height of Martial Law, the three artists break through the 21st century's silence and apathy with new-found figuration and tempered fury to address "old" crises of the personal and the political, and at the same time articulate what are considered status quo predicaments: Filipino *diaspora*, religious fanaticism and middle-class indifference. Conscious of the capacity of form to educate and enlighten, the artists have created deeply humanizing works, transformative in realigning powers and ideals.

Torrijos at Conspiracy Garden



"DIVINE Fusion," by Sandra Torrijos

Sandra Torrijos presents her 11th solo exhibit "Divine Fusion," featuring wood sculptures, paintings and drawings, until March 28 at Conspiracy Garden Restaurant along Visayas Avenue, QC. Starting with wrapped images in the 1980s to show the sorrows of women, Torrijos, a CCP 13th Artists Awardee, has continued to draw and sculpt the diverse pathways of women in colors and forms that also record her own personal life and struggles. Call 4267479 or 0919-3473009.

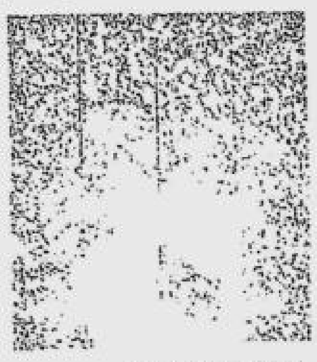
Amacio, Duterte in Iloilo

Lester Amacio and Shielo Duterte present their recent works in "Versus" March 23-April 5 at Galleri Graphitto, 2/L, Robinsons Place Iloilo. Amacio, a self-taught painter, is a veteran of several group shows in Iloilo and Manila. His art is iconoclastic. Duterte experiments with surrealism, inspired by ideas like matricide, social discrimination and sexual incontinence. He does his bizarre works in charcoal and wash. Call 0920-7922470.

Art raffle for a cause

"Heart for Life," an art raffle for a cause, will be held March 27, 6 p.m., at Silahis Center, 744 Gen. Luna St., Intramuros, Manila. Over 200 renowned artists including Malang, Pacheco, Angel Cacnio, Remy Boquiren, Magoo Valencia, Lydia Velasco Cruz and Inday Cadapan, to name a few, have donated their masterpieces to be raffled off to ticket buyers. Proceeds will go to Operation Blessing's ongoing humanitarian projects. Tickets are priced at P5,000 each. Call 8404174, 8124747, 0918-9187658 and 0917-5580667 for details.

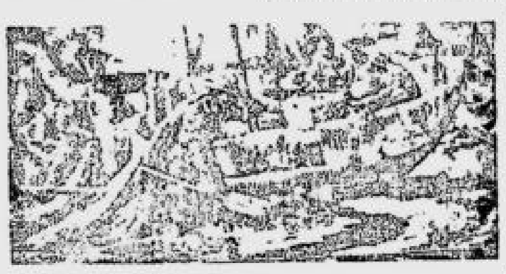
Pardo de Leon show



ABSTRACTION by Pardo de Leon

In "Recent Paintings," on view at Finale Art File (4/F LaO Center, Pasay Road cor. Makati Ave., Makati City) until March 22, Pardo de Leon abandons the terrain of the figurative and exults in the subtleties of color as sheer, abrupt forms, swirling, cohering toward a pattern, only to disintegrate into a succulent mess of strokes. The result is an abstract evocation seized at gut-level—a gestural, abiding commitment to the fleetingness of thought and the willful resistance from articulate, as opposed to purely visual, idea. The exhibit is curated by Roberto Chabet. Call 8132310 or visit www.finaleartfile.com.

Herrera at Enterprise



"FISHING," by Mike Herrera

Mike Herrera is holding his one-man show of oil paintings until March 23 at Art Hall, 3/L of the Enterprise Center, corner Ayala Avenue and Paseo de Roxas, Makati City. The works mostly depict human-interest topics. Part of the proceeds will go to Art Discovery and Learning Foundation Inc. and Eastwood Art Club.

3 generations at Food and Art

MARIE Gabrielle E. Saenz, Cynthia S. Campbell and (seated) Mila Delgado-Enage

"Reminiscence: Three Generations," featuring the works of three generations of female artists—Mila Delgado-Enage, Cynthia Santos-Campbell and Marie Gabrielle Escaler-Saenz—will be on view March 21-April 21 at Food and Art Galerie, 12/F, GT Tower Ayala Ave. and H.V. dela Costa St., Makati City. Delgado-Enage's watercolor pieces focus mostly on landscape and still life. Santos-Campbell of Princeton, New Jersey, exhibits several mixed-media pieces, primarily oil pastel on sandpaper and felt and watercolor. Saenz's pieces are in watercolor, oil pastel and acrylic on canvas. Call 7527568.

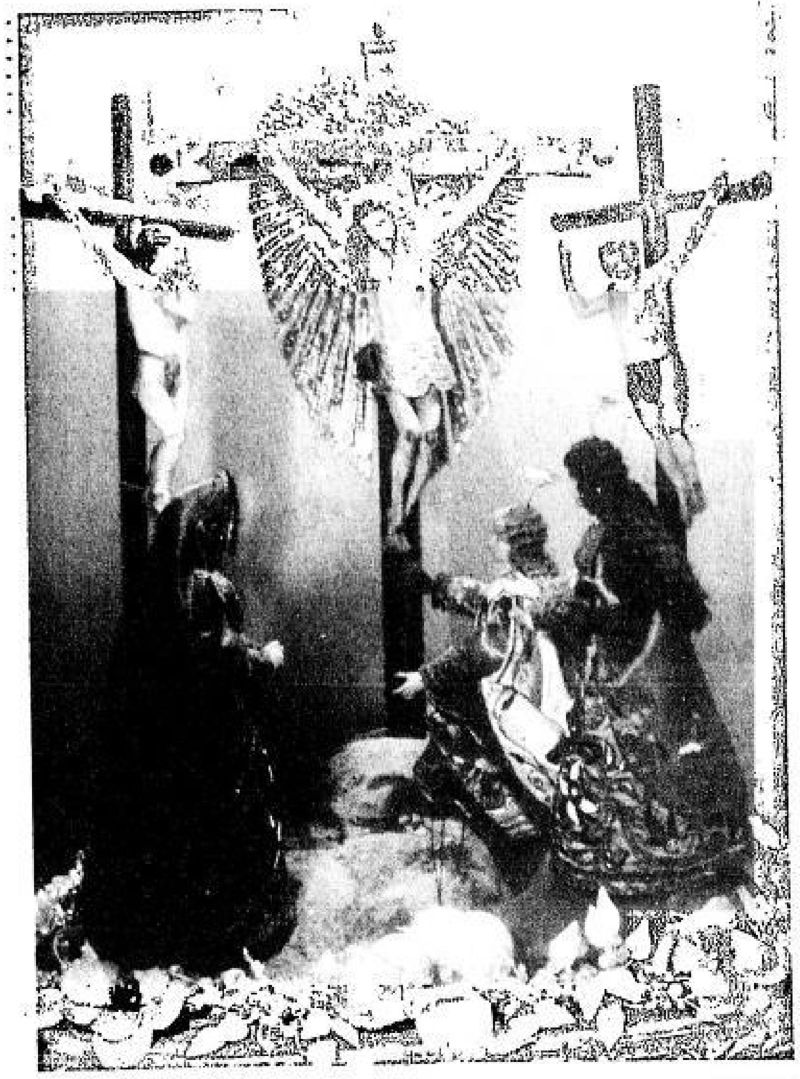
'Balik Alamat' at Heritage

Filipinas Heritage Library mounts "Balik Alamat," an exhibit of selected legends of flowers, fruits and plants collected by Gaudencio Aquino, Alfonso Santos and Damiana Eugenio. The show also displays botanical prints from "Flora de Filipinas" by Padre Manuel Blanco, OSA, renowned botanist during the 19th century. The exhibit runs until March 31. Call 8921801 or 8921810.

On-the-spot painting contest

Ayala Museum presents "12th Likhang Sining On-the-Spot Painting Contest" March 24. The contest is open to all high-school students age 12-18. Entry forms are available at the Rotary Offices or at the Ayala Museum Office. Deadline of submission of entries is today. Call 7577117 local 28 or 7533098. You may submit entry forms via fax at 7573588 or 8451655.

Icons of Mater Dolorosa, suffering Christ on exhibit



CALVARIO from the collection of Noel Abquilan

N.S. de las Angustias, an ivory piece courtesy of Tom Joven

"MISTERIOS DOlorosos," an exhibit of sacred Roman Catholic icons depicting the grieving Blessed Mother and the suffering Christ, will formally open at the Museo de Santo Domingo on March 24, 6 p.m.

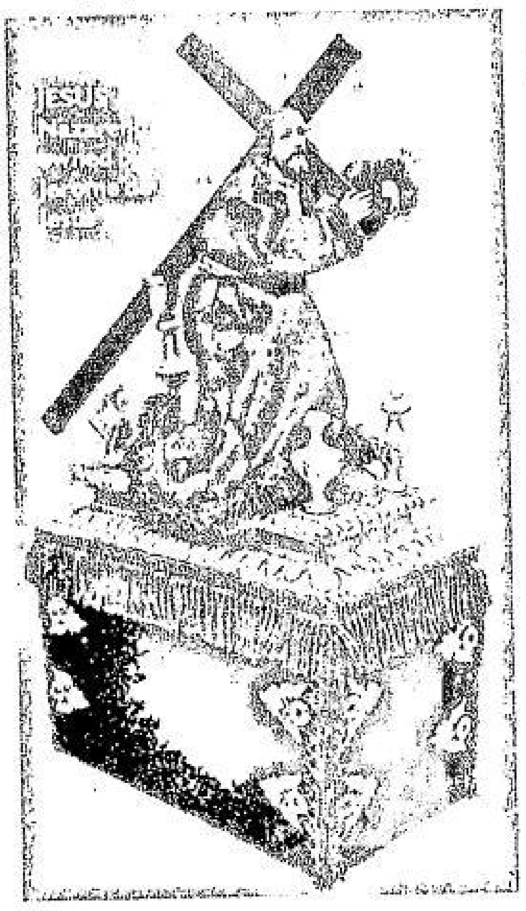
The exhibit is the fifth in a series of shows and highlights the rosarian character of the Santo Domingo Church, which is the national shrine of Our Lady of the Holy Rosary of La Naval.

The series is curated by Museo de Sto. Domingo curator Rei Nicolas.

Rare images, icons, photos and prints of the suffering Christ and the Mater Dolorosa will be featured in the exhibit. The items will come from the collections of religious art restorer Tom Joven, landscape artist Jerome de Jesus, interior designers Noel Abquilan, Raymond Naval and Jun Manahan.

Rev. Fr. Gerald Zabala, OP, parish priest of Santo Domingo Parish, and Rev. Fr. Bienvenido Trinilla, OP, prior of the convent will inaugurate the Lenten exhibit on March 24, after the 6 p.m. mass. The show will run until April 6.

"N.S. de Soledad," an oil painting in wood courtesy of Jerome de Jesus



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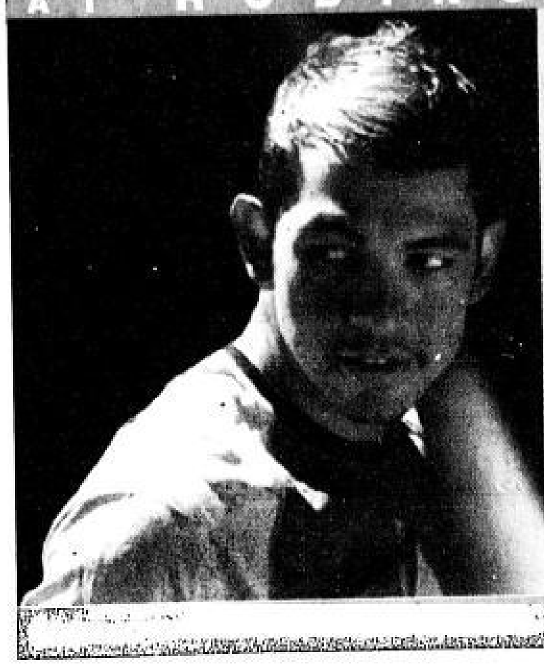

NCCA Lifetime Achievement Awards

THE NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR CULTURE and the Arts (NCCA) recently honored outstanding cultural workers for lifetime achievement with Dangal ng Haraya.

Present during the awarding were Emilie V. Tiongco, NCCA deputy executive director; Rustica C. Carpio for writing and criticism; Amelia Lapeña-Bonifacio, for promotion of Philippine culture; representatives of Pura Santillan-Castrence and Samuel K. Tan, for cultural writing and historical research; Mitch Valdez, representing the Organisasyong ng Pilipinong Mang-aawit, for artists' protection; and Gilda Cordero-Fernando, for cultural management.

The awarding ceremonies were held at Tanghalang Leandro V. Locsin, NCCA Bldg., Intramuros, Manila.

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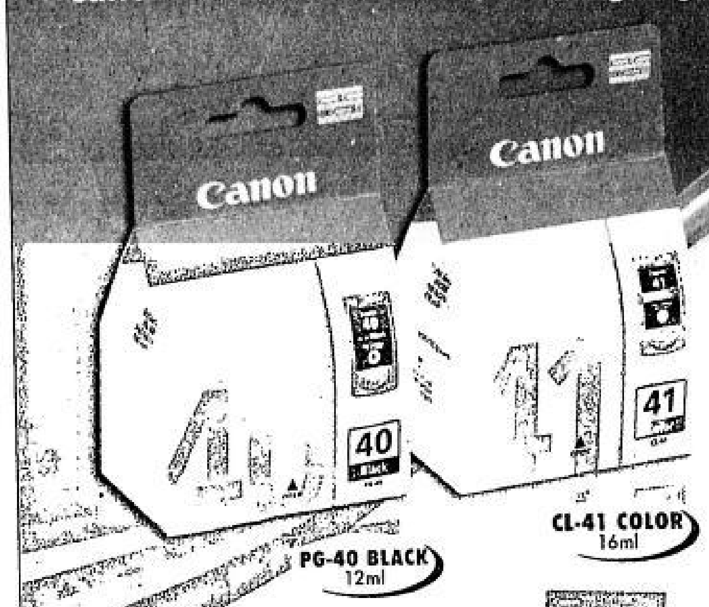

The Perils of Printing

By Mark Espaldon

With the number of manufacturers and distributors of home printers in the country today, it's easy to get confused on what brand to get. Many manufacturers pack tons of features into their printers, often confusing the consumer and drowning them in a sea of unintelligible terms and tech jargon. But what really counts when you buy a printer? Ultimately, it boils down to quality and quantity of printouts and cost-per page.

A recent study was conducted on various printer manufacturers on how their ink cartridges measure up to each other. Many aspects of the ink cartridges were scrutinized: size of cartridge, ink capacity and number of

compared to its major competitors. For starters, Canon's ink cartridges are larger. Their entry-level printers contain a total of 28ml of ink (12ml colored, 16ml black) versus 14ml and 5ml for competitors. That translates to more printouts per cartridge. And when calculated per-page, the total printout cost per page is significantly lower than similarly positioned brand.

Number of nozzles also influence the performance and quality of a printout. The more nozzles on an ink cartridge, the more precise your printouts. This leads to less ink wastage and more effective use of ink. Tests found that Canon packed about 15 times more nozzles into their entry-level ink cartridges. With that amount of nozzles, ink delivery is ultra-fast and print speeds are increased dramatically.

In terms of ink life, Canon's inks have a Chromalife 100 Guarantee. Chromalife is Canon's patented ink

The more nozzles on an ink cartridge, the more precise your printouts are. This leads to less ink wastage and more effective use of ink. Tests found that Canon packed about 15 times more nozzles into their entry-level ink cartridges. With that amount of nozzles, ink delivery is ultra-fast, and print speeds are increased dramatically.

In terms of ink life, Canon's inks have a Chromalife 100 Guarantee. Chromalife is Canon's patented ink and dye technology that guarantees color fidelity for a long-lasting 100 years for photo printouts. This ensures that photo printouts will be brilliantly vivid and colorful for a long time to come.

With all these technologies packed into a mere printer ink cartridge, it's no wonder that Canon is on top of their game. Technology,

INQUIRER
It's all over; Marcos flees!

What's the news behind the news?
- Letty Jimenez-Magsanoc
Editor in Chief, Philippine Daily Inquirer

What nonsense is this?
- Eugenia Duran-Apostol
Founder, Philippine Daily Inquirer

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Filipino tenor is fast-rising US opera star

By Antonio C. Hila
Contributor

FILIPINO TENOR LEODIGARIO "Gary" B. del Rosario is a fast-rising opera star in the US, getting critical raves in both lead and secondary roles in recently staged productions in Seattle, New Mexico and California.

Del Rosario debuted at the Seattle Opera Company in 2005 in Offenbach's "Tales of Hoffman," doing the *comprimario* or secondary role of Nathanael, which elicited good reviews.

Last year, he was cited for his supporting role as Malcolm in Verdi's "Macbeth" by critics Mike Murray of Herald Net and Melinda Bargreen of Seattle Times. Both rated his performance "excellent," a grading also given to tenor Joseph Calleja from Malta, who played Macduff.

Calleja is the current sensation in Europe. He recently essayed the role of Duke of Mantua in another Verdi opera, "Rigoletto," at New York's Metropolitan Theater.

Del Rosario has reportedly earned Calleja's friendship. Calleja has expressed admiration for the Filipino's impeccable style of singing.

Just recently, Gary essayed the coveted role of the Duke in "Rigoletto" in a production at Modesto, California, with another Filipino singer in the lead cast, baritone Andrew Fernando, who performed the title role of the hunchback.

The production was sponsored by the Townsend Opera Players Company, and ran Feb. 17, 23, and 25.

Del Rosario immediately called up this writer after the gala performance to share the glory he reaped—a long applause after his soulful rendition of one of the three arias in the opera, "Parmi veder le lagrime" (Art Thou Weeping in Loneliness). The other two arias were "Questa o quella" and "La Donna e Mobile."

FILIPINO/ D2

GARY del Rosario as Pinkerton opposite Dohee Kim as Madama Butterfly

> Leodigario del Rosario has been rated 'excellent' in Seattle, California and New Mexico

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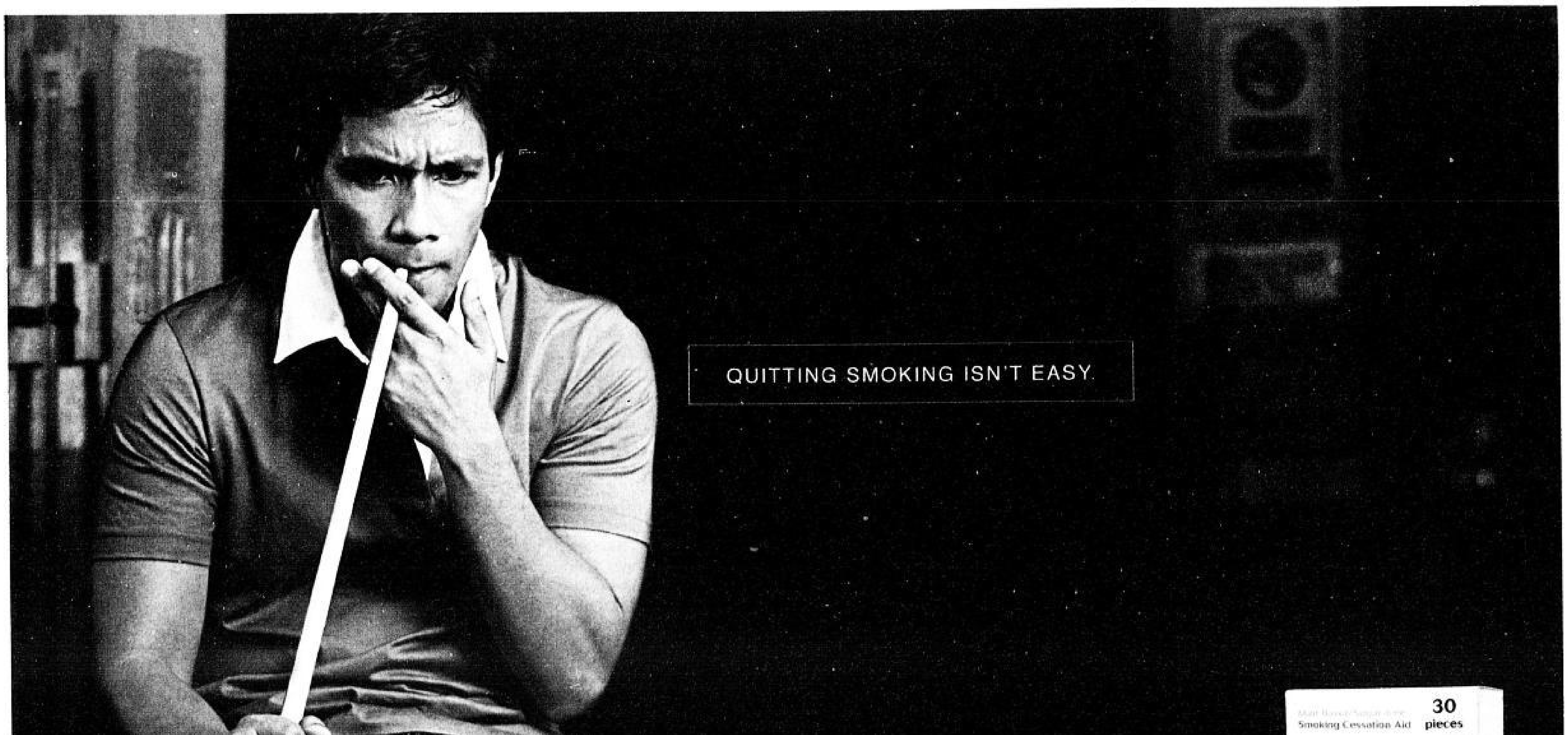

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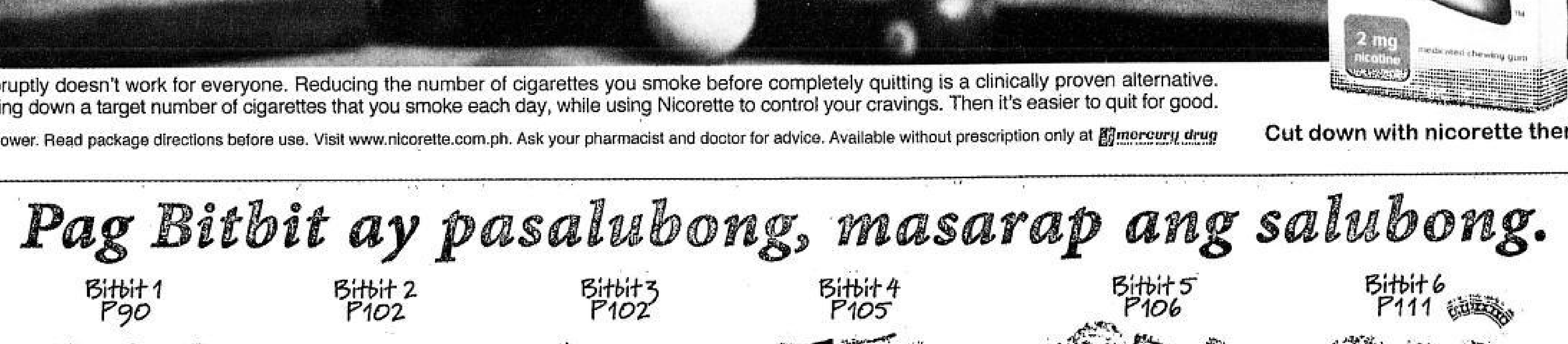

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AMILBANGSA in typical *pangalay* movement

CHULACHART Aranyanak demon
how Thai classical dancers are train

Shall we dance?

Asian 'dance summit' evokes dreams of *pangalay* diplomacy

By Mariel N. Francisco
Contributor

THAT'S WHAT WE DID FOR three exhilarating days—dance to gongs, drums and *kulintangan*—as we joined hearts and minds with our Asian neighbors in the magic of dance. Nothing equals the joy, warmth, goodwill, understanding, compassion and instant friendship that dancing together can bring.

At the first-ever International Conference on the Conservation and Popularization of Pangalay and Related Asian Dance Cultures, held Feb. 8-10 at the Riverbend Hotel in Marikina City, Cambodians, Indonesians, Thais, Malaysians, Japanese and Filipinos moved to the same beat, sans the directive of any government official or diplomat.

The conference was organized by the Alun-Alun Dance Circle, which propagates *pangalay*, the traditional dance which took root in Tau Sug communities in pre-Islamic and pre-Christian times.

"*Pangalay* is our most truly Philippine dance because it antedates the other influences that shaped our culture. It is pre-everything!" stresses Ligaya Fernando-Amilbangsa, 65, the foremost proponent and performer of the dance today.

Its striking resemblance to other Asian dances demonstrated at the conference with their accompanying percussive music points to the mother culture of India as common source. Hindu and Buddhist influences are apparent in the gentle gestures and linguistic borrowings that still linger in our intangible culture.

Pangalay in Sanskrit means "temple of dance" and is related to "offering," as in our Philippine word *alay*.

The slow, flowing, meditative dance, performed with intricate hand movements and mincing and shuffling steps, has obvious relationships to Thai and Cambodian classical dance, Javanese *wayang wong*, and the different types of Okinawan traditional dance collectively known as Ryukyu Buyo.

Devoted to dance

When we were not dancing, we were talking about dance. The perfectly balanced conference interspersed entrancing dance demonstrations with scholarly papers on dance research and sharing of problems in dance conservation by such eminent academicians as Esteban Basilio Villaruz, head of the Dance Program of the UP College of Music; and Mohd Anis Md. Nor of the Cultural Center, University of Malaya in Kuala Lumpur.

How to make Filipinos, especially the youth, love their culture and their country through the art of dance was their task as much as learning the dance for their own self-development. Their enthusiasm culminated on the last day in group plans reported through dance for the propagation of *pangalay*, which Villaruz described in his book "Treading Through 45 Years of Philippine Dance" (UP Press, launched again at the conference) as the closest thing we have to a classical dance.

The moving spirit behind the event and its undisputed "star" was Ligaya Amilbangsa, whose delicate features and slight figure belie the dynamo of passion that she is when it comes to Philippine traditional dance.

She fell in love with the dance during her years in Tawi-tawi as the young bride of Datu Punjungan Amilbangsa (her classmate at FEU), and has devoted more than 30 years of her life to mastering and teaching it.

A highlight of the conference was Amilbangsa's sharing of her AIM (Amilbangsa Instruction Method), using the original stick drawings she devised decades ago as memory guide. Basic instruction begins with breath training along with hands and arms making a figure 8, the cosmological symbol for infinity.

These progress to more complex finger contacts, flicking and flipping, also distinctive features of other Asian dance forms, in which they have even more intricate and subtle variations (*mudras*) and specific meanings.

Solitary journey

Amilbangsa recounted the start of her solitary journey with *pangalay* in the 1970s, when no one seemed to value it as part of our intangible cultural heritage.

Disheartened by her failure to gain support despite offering free lessons, she went into hiatus for 17 years, until N
Matilac of Peta (Philippine Edu
Theater Association) tracked her
1997 for an interview.

The two have closely collaborat
1999 in forming the AlunAlun Danc
which nurtures *pangalay* devotees in
lessons at Amilbangsa's studio in An

The importance of having a sy
passing on such an ephemeral art fo
in its place of origin was poignantly
to the fore by Mahail Hadjan, head
Department of Mindanao State U
College of Technology and Oceano

Leader of the Tambuli Cultural
founded by Amilbangsa in 1974, an
agile performer, he confirmed that
tawi communities today *pangalay*
shadowed by pop culture imbibed
mass media. Were it not for Amil
documentation and conservation e
said, *pangalay* would have become

Amilbangsa has written two l
books on Sulu archipelago cultur
galay," published by Ayala Mus

Filipino tenor is fast-rising . . .

From page D1

DEL Rosario at Kimo Theater with Peter Lindskoog in the title role of Rigoletto

Del Rosario said that at the technical rehearsal, the patrons of the company also gave him a long ovation, stalling the performance for some 15 minutes.

Before he knew it, at the end of the rehearsal, he was already being considered for the fall production in November of J. Strauss' "Die Fledermaus."

The review of the gala night presentation hailed Del Rosario as a standout.

Lisa Millegan, writing for the Modesto Bee, said: "The star of this production is Seattle tenor Del Rosario who plays the Duke. He's got the requisite swagger and cockiness down pat and projects his voice to the back of the house with his commanding rendition of the famed aria 'La Donna e Mobile.'"

Millegan said further: "It's chilling to listen to it in its original dark context ..."

On Andrew Fernando, she said: "The New York baritone who plays the title role conveys anguish and anger with his voice."

Repeat feat

Such a feat was a repeat of the reception Del Rosario got while essaying the same role in a previous production mounted by the Opera Southwest production in Kimo Theater in Albuquerque, New Mexico, which ran for three nights last December.

The production was hailed as the company's "outstanding triumph to date," rivaling anything by the Santa Fe Opera, the other opera company in the area.

Critic D. S. Crafts of the Albuquerque Journal raved over Del Rosario's eloquent performance:

"Despite Rigoletto being the title role, it was actually the Duke of Mantua who has the lion's share of the most memorable tunes. Philippine native Leodigario del Rosario delivers all the familiar melodies with outstanding power and easy production even in the highest register. His opening 'Questa o quella' has carefree ease, which carried throughout the evening. But for all the virtuosic vocal color of the first two acts, it is the third which displays the most impassioned singing, beginning with the Duke's 'Ella mi tu rapita...'"

During the rehearsals in November, Del Rosario rang my cell phone and asked to be refreshed about the cadenza of "Parmi" I had taught him many years back.

I had a whiff of nostalgia as I hurriedly got the marked score of the aria, and played it for his listening pleasure on the piano.

I was happy with the thought that, finally, Gary del Rosario had arrived on the international operatic scene, finally fulfilling the burning desire he had treasured while learning the basics of singing with me.

He had nurtured every lesson through sheer hard work and tenacious determination. He plodded on despite the big financial burden of continuing his training by studying and performing abroad, pitting himself against world-class talents.

The Duke of Mantua was one dream role he had wanted to do. Other dream roles were Pinkerton, Alfredo, Don José and many more that fit the lyric texture of his vocal instrument. Lady Luck finally caught up with him and allowed him to realize some of his favorite roles.

Last October, he got another rave from critic Kim Novak for his superb portrayal of Pinkerton in Puccini's "Madama Butterfly" in Seattle.

Writing for Bellevue Times, Novak said Del Rosario's "voice has power and finesse that resembles the tenors of the old generations that we don't hear anymore."

The above could be the most glorious accolade Gary has received so far, as it certainly affirms the Italian bel canto style of singing that he is very well grounded on, and, indeed, is rare to find nowadays.

On many occasions, singers, pedagogues and vocal coaches such as Christa Ludwig, Allan Glassman, Dawn Upshaw, Gordon Hawkins, Paul Sperry and Warren Jones, who had heard Del Rosario in master classes, singled out his voice for its power, resonance and brilliance, especially in the high register.

When Del Rosario gets back to Seattle, a new role awaits him, that of Don José in Bizet's "Carmen," which will be staged in Tacoma in March.

In August, in Bellevue, the role of Alfredo in Verdi's "La Traviata" awaits him, too.

Seattle has become Gary del Rosario's residence. He stays there with his wife Maria, an Italian-American whom he met at the Cleveland Institute of Music, and who earned her bachelor's degree in Vocal Performance at the Peabody Conservatory of Music.

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Zoto was founded in 1970 when the informal settlers at the Tondo Foreshore Land were to be demolished in favor of IMF/World Bank projects. To ward off eviction, the residents organized themselves into Zoto.

Until today, the organization continues its fight for a decent housing for the poor. The lack of material resources did not hinder them in bringing their issues of migration and poverty into a wider audience.

Zoto was chosen to be this season's winner because of its creative use of the different available tools and forms of communication that kept the community united and empowered.

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ASIAN Oneness. Amilbangsa, Takana Kojima, Suon Bun Rith, Kazue Higa, Nanette Matilac

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1983, and "Ukkil," published by the Ateneo University Press last year.

Culturally tragic

"*Pangalay* is dying in its cradle," Amilbangsa and Hadjan lament.

Video footage taken by Matilac in neighboring Malaysia showed children doing the *ocho-ocho* with *pangalay* hand movements—which would have been amusing were it not so culturally tragic.

Yet Amilbangsa's group insists *pangalay* is not to be viewed as a rigid artifact, for the very nature of dance is that it is constantly evolving in time and space. At birthdays, anniversaries, book-launchings and NGO gatherings, AlunAlun has performed *pangalay* to classical, folk, and Western and local pop music.

What about *tinikling*, *itik-itik*, *maglalatik*, and all that we know as "folk dance"?

Peter Paul de Guzman, Fil-Am dance teacher of Culture Philippines Folk Arts in Los Angeles, provided some clues in his talk. To Filipinos abroad, engagement with Philippine culture and its conservation is a living issue, he said.

Whereas the generation of his parents copied the dance productions of the touring troupes like Bayanihan and the Ramon Obusan Dance Troupe, young Fil-Ams today want to define their "Filipinicity" by drinking from the source—Inang Bayan.

De Guzman, 26, already an accomplished performer who would do us proud in any international production, is now learning *pangalay* with Amilbangsa.

To keep *pangalay* alive for future generations, everybody agreed, we must simply keep dancing it. And so we did.

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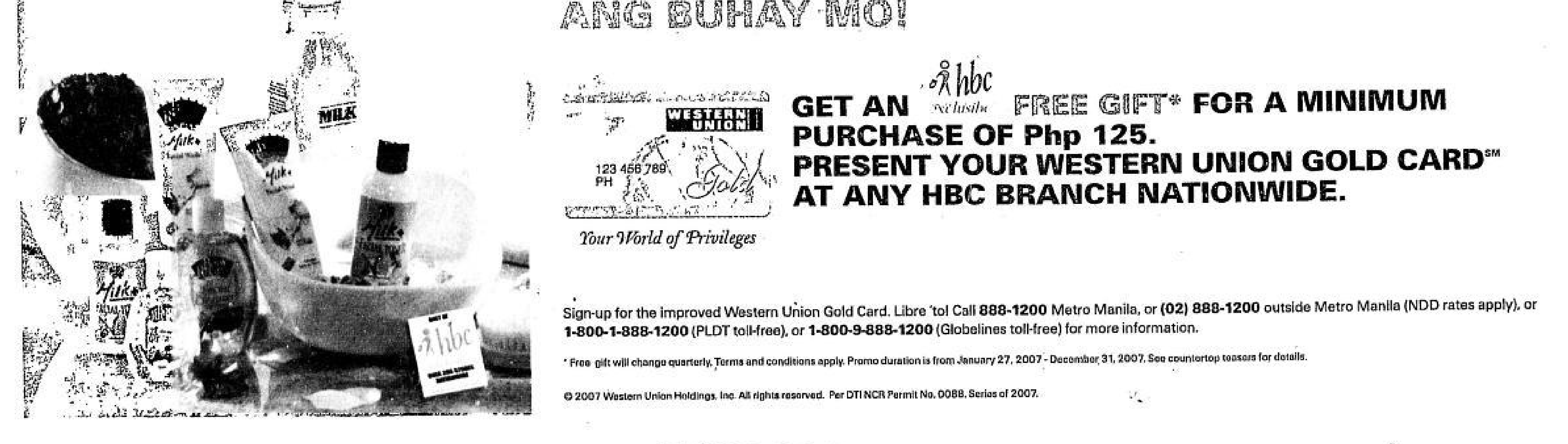

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KC Concepcion is photographed by Jun de Leon for a cool summer cover; she talks about life on her own in Paris.

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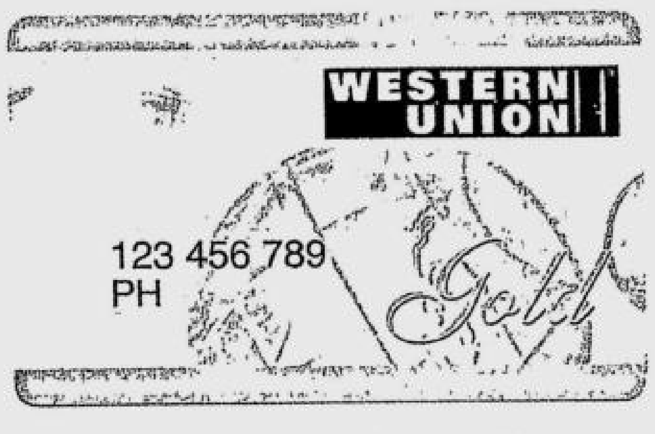

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Children's book for the 'Sol'

Artist Farley del Rosario's suite of paintings for a new children's book builds on his strengths as an exciting fabulist of colors and curlicues

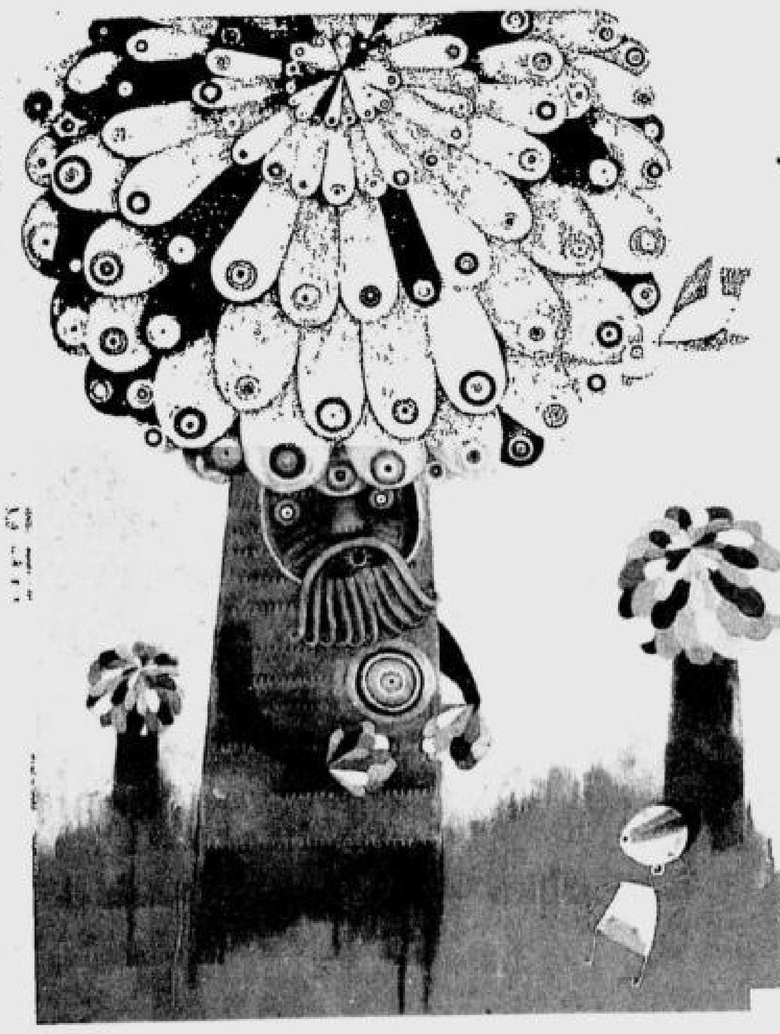
By Jessica Jalandoni-Robillos
Contributor

SOL IS SPANISH FOR "SUN." It is also the Roman mythological god personifying the sun as well as the fifth musical note in a major scale.

It's also the newest children's book of the same title, which will be launched March 20 at the Artists' Space of the Ayala Museum, along with the opening of the suite of paintings that were originally made to illustrate the book.

Written by Agay Llanera and illustrated by Farley del Rosario, the book is the third

CHILDREN'S/ E2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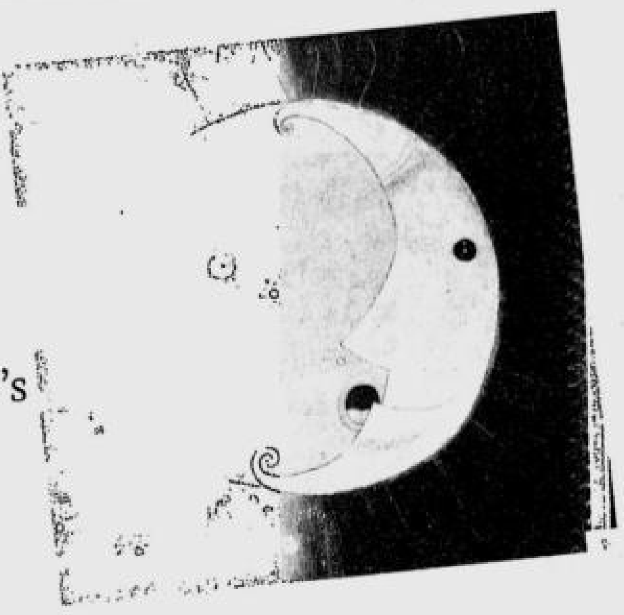
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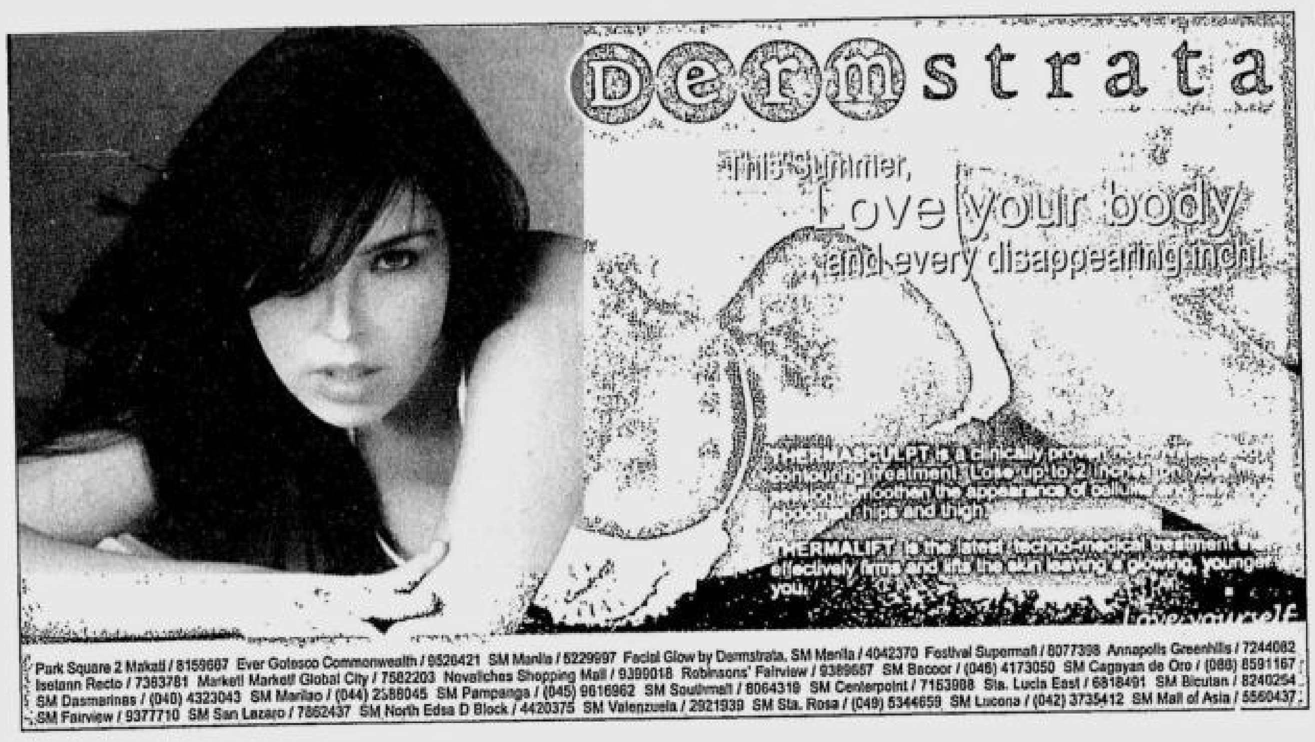
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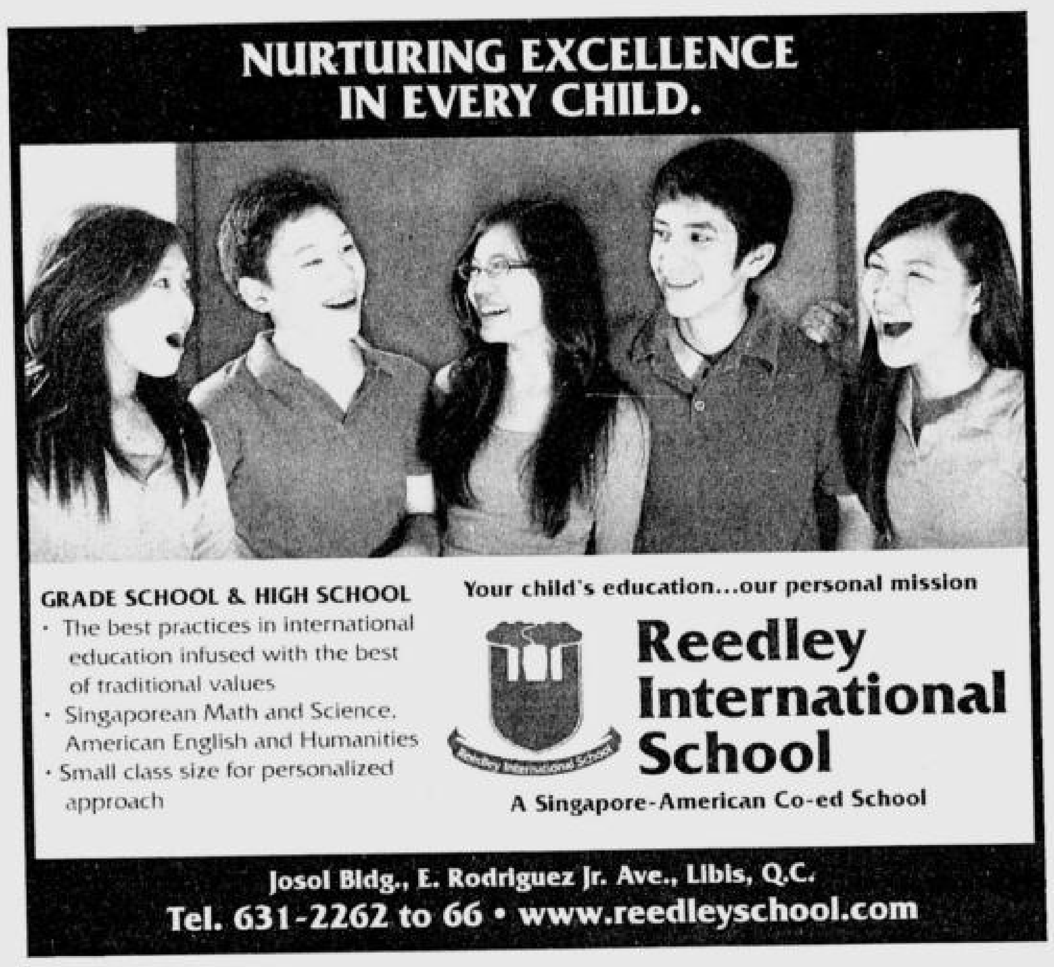
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FROM BOOK TO FILM

Tracing the labyrinthine source of 'Pan's Labyrinth'

THE PALE Man, devourer of children, a monster encountered by the little heroine

By Constantino C. Tejero

GUILLERMO DEL TORO'S PHANTASmagoric film "Pan's Labyrinth," which got three Oscars at the recent Academy Awards, is an archetypical fairy tale with a postmodernist twist.

Nominated for Best Original Screenplay (and losing out to the cutesy crowd-pleaser "Little Miss Sunshine"), it is actually a grand pastiche of literary as well as cinematic references that should make a mockery of one's conventional idea of originality.

The disparate elements that went into its making, and tracing the way to its origin, can be as labyrinthine as its central metaphor. It is an indication of the filmmaker's mastery of the medium that, despite its literary sources and influences, it emerges as a very cinematic film.

In an interview with Sight and Sound magazine, Del Toro acknowledges as key inspiration "The Science of Fairy Tales" by Edwin Sidney Hartland: "This book classified fairy tales and broke down the recurring myths—the myth of choice; the ritual of not eating or drinking while you're in the fairy world; facing very often a figure like the frog. I took all these things and came up with the story. The psychosexual interpretation is, of course, much more modern, but I find it very reductive.

"For me, the film is a dark fairy tale in the classic sense. The settings of Andersen, the Brothers Grimm and Oscar Wilde were incredibly brutal: Hansel and Gretel were two children abandoned in the woods in the middle of a famine to die of hunger and cold. But you need to know the brutality for the reality of the magic to happen. That's why the war made such a perfect backdrop."

Dark fabulism

Set in post-Civil War Spain, the film tells the story of the girl Ofelia who has been persuaded by an ancient faun that she is actually a princess who escaped from the Underground Realm, where there are no lies and pain, to live among mortals.

It is a world of magic and evil. It is a brutish world populated by brutal creatures. And as in the classic fairy tale, our little heroine has to undergo several tests, secret missions, dangerous tasks, and encounter monsters, fairy insects, wicked humans.

It is a clangorous battle of Innocence versus Evil. At the center of conflict are Ofelia and her autocratic stepfather Capitán Vidal.

The film exposes the monstrosities of fascism and explores the brutalities of war, paralleled with Ofelia's struggle to return to her nether kingdom and forsake the world of humans with all their deceptions and torments.

Clearly a companion piece is Del Toro's 2001

THE ANCIENT faun persuades Ofelia she is a princess escaped from the Underground Realm.

film "The Devil's
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Children's book for the 'Sol'

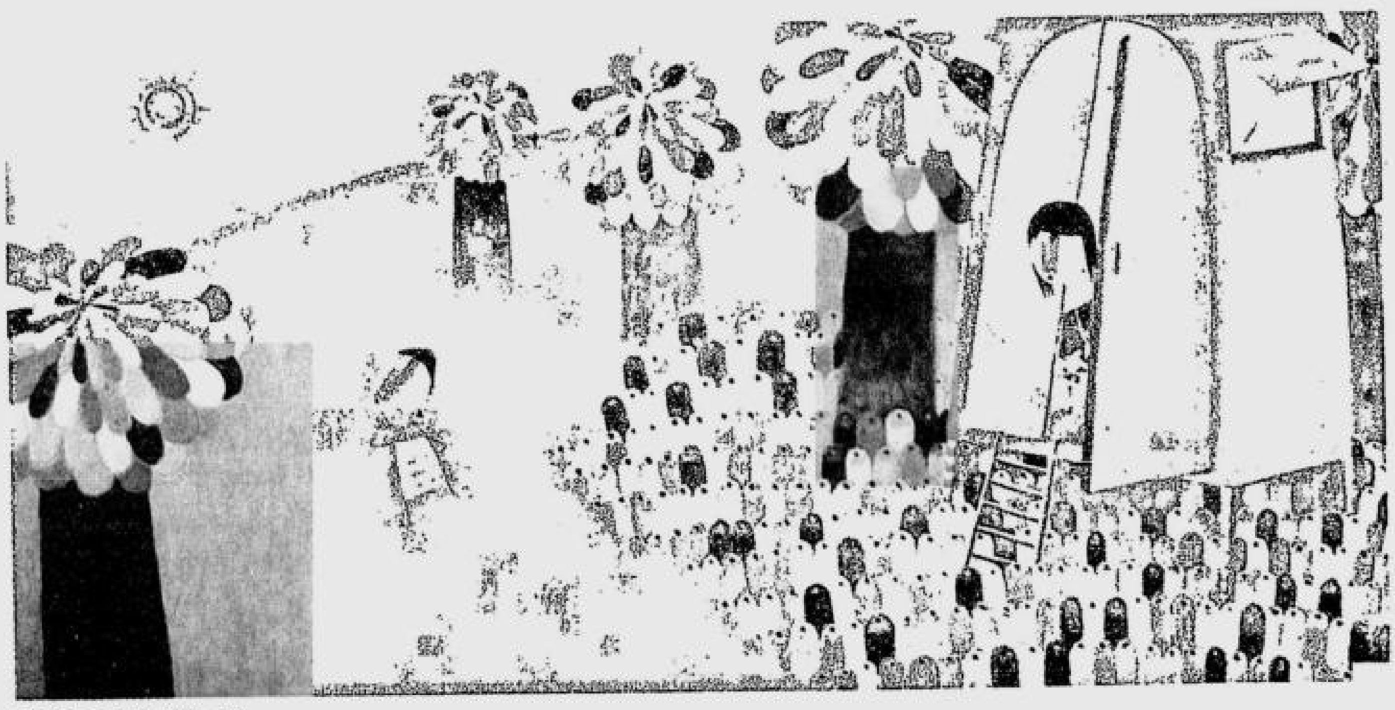
From page E1

bilingual children's book produced jointly by the Center for Arts, New Ventures and Sustainable Development (Canvas) and the University of Santo Tomas Publishing House. The faithful Filipino translation is by Susan de Guzman.

The book's layout is done with aplomb by artist Daniel Palma-Tayona. Elements from the artworks strategically float on some pages' corners; a piece is cut in two and flank texts in others. The design is a testament to Canvas' thrust of producing notable mergings of the visual and the literary arts. The printing by the UST Publishing House, declared twice in a row as Publisher of the Year by the Manila Critics Circle, is first-rate.

Llanera, a member of Kuting (Kwentista ng Mga Tsikiting), weaves a tale of poignant, selfless love. Although the book's subtitle reads "A Legend About the Sun," the story is also about Amorsolo (which, roughly translated, is Spanish for "only love") whose only love is the biggest star in our universe, enamored by its splendor, when it "used to shine not just with soft light but also with captivating beauty."

The besotted lad, who becomes a violin virtuoso through the tutelage of his mother, spends most of his time professing his love by serenading the sun. His ardor drives him to the point of breaking his instrument's strings, which he promptly repairs by plucking his own hair strands to replace the strings just so he could continue his amorous playing.



"WISDOM in Wood"

The writer is, indeed, in her element as she extols music as a supreme form of expression, for her own storytelling is charmingly lyrical, her language lilting and flowing. Much like a song, she allows her protagonist to repeat the refrain of playing music for the most heavenly body of all, despite his efforts remaining unappreciated.

Twist

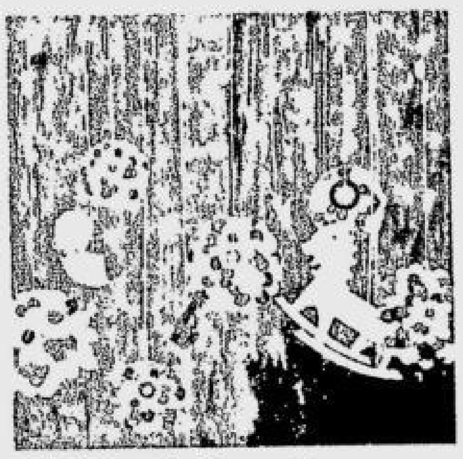
The endearing twist to this story is the appearance of The Wood, a magical forest guardian not too different from the Ents in "The Lord of The Rings."

The Wood gives Amorsolo the gift of a wooden rocking horse from which he could readily pluck the hairs to tie to his violin for uninterrupted playing to the sun.

In depicting the story in colors and lines, 26-year-old Del Rosario remains true to form. The young artist seems truly adept at rendering images drawn from texts. Earlier, his works were the visual complements to the essay by National Artist F. Sionil José and other entries in the Fookien Times' Philippines Yearbook 2006.

In "Sol," Del Rosario's naïf complements the story, softening an otherwise sad theme. His signature round-eyed urchin becomes the soulful and devoted Amorsolo.

He whimsically portrays the sun amid his vintage circle or cluster of clouds (which may remind one of the mahjong chip suit) with rays that look like tentacles that curl inward (he usually paints curlicued lines for his subjects' extremities). The curlicues may signify the sun's vanity, the inward curve tantamount to the attention she craves for.



"BACK from the Heavens"

The Wood sports a leafy head of what seem like peacock feathers, elements that are also seen as grass in other pieces. These depictions are certainly a limited-edition collection of Del Rosario's art, for the artist confesses to having very little liking for yellow.

Conflict ensues when the moon, jealous of Amorsolo, gives the sun a golden crown. The denouement of the story is tragic. But Del Rosario somehow buffers or softens it. He shows Amorsolo, his violin, and his rocking horse hanging from strings along with topiary balls that signify their fall being broken by treetops.

Through the book, parents can actually give sideline scientific information to their kids while they read, such as the fact that the moon actually gets its light from the sun and not the other way around. The artistic license is rife for another legend and story.

E-mail comments to majorday@gmail.com

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THE EPONYMOUS creature of Guillermo del Toro's fabulous film

Backbone," which is also set in
War with an orphaned boy bat-
l adult.
fabulism has been darkened
ences as Angela Carter's post-
g of the fairy tales; William Pe-
e "The Ninth Configuration"
fiction); Clive Barker's horror
s; Wes Craven's chillers; Goya's
ings of war, witchcraft and the
his "Black Paintings," particu-
Saturn Devouring One of His
elheim's "The Uses of Enchant-
rroll's "Through the Looking

erence is the last, with Ofelia's
the labyrinth into the Under-

ground Realm analogous to Alice's adventures in Wonderland.

Cinema of the marvelous

Unacknowledged is the influence of Jack Clayton's "The Innocents" (film adaptation of Henry James' novella "The Turn of the Screw")—from the opening sequence of haunting leitmotiv and somber voiceover; a shadowed close-up gradually revealing a tormented figure; a girl wandering in the woodland; an insect coming out of a stone statue's mouth; the battle over a child's soul between a male and a female authority figure; cavernous house and deserted garden as arena of conflict; stairs spiraling upward to a circular opening filled with sunlight; to the final sequence of woman and child posed as Pietà.

"El Laberinto del Fauno" is unquestionably a landmark film from this Mexican visual stylist, certainly one of the most important released last year. But when the National Society of Film Critics chose it as Best Picture of 2006 (characteristically defying the popular but predictable choices of other award-giving bodies), we really did a double-take.

We never thought those supersnobbish critics would take it that seriously, much less put it in the league of Michael Haneke's "Caché," Pedro Almodóvar's "Volver," Terrence Malick's "The New World," Tommy Lee Jones' "The Three Burials of Melquiades Estrada."

Already, the film has been compared to Cocteau's "Orphée," Charles Laughton's "The Night of the Hunter," Neil Jordan's "The Company of Wolves," Victor Erice's "The Spirit of the Beehive." Already, it has been hailed as the "Citizen Kane" of fantasy cinema.

Though Del Toro is just 42 and has only six films to his credit, colleagues obviously have faith in him, as Almodóvar produced "The Devil's Backbone" and Alfonso Cuarón produced this one. The mounting chorus of acclaim only confirms him to be the finest living exponent of fabulist cinema.

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JULY 21, 2007. MILLIONS of Potter fans from all over the world have marked this date on their calendars as the day "Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows" is published.

The seventh and final installment of the wildly popular series soared to No. 1 in the Barnes & Noble, and Amazon bestsellers lists just a few hours after the publication date was first announced on author JK Rowling's website.

The "Harry Potter" series has sold over 325 million copies worldwide and has been translated into 64 languages. All six "Harry Potter" books have been No. 1 bestsellers around the world and 2007 marks the 10th anniversary of the publication of the first book in the series, "Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone."

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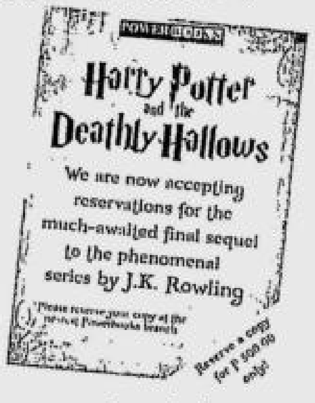

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New collection of 'provocative' poetry

"SEXY, FUN AND IRREVERENT, tragic and romantic, this book is a shrewd cocktail of pleasure and poetic truth, a juice-stained path into a garden of delights."

Thus says Ricardo de Ungria of "Textual Relations," one of the latest releases from the University of the Philippines Press. This new collection by Ramil Digal Gulle displays this poet's "eye for the absurd" as well as his "provocative closures and sense of humor."

"Ten Things to Remember in a Nuclear War in the Philippines," "Brassiere Speak" and "The Boy Who Saw Mommy Kissing Santa Claus" are only some of the poems in the book.

Gulle is a poet, journalist and freelance writer. He was associate for poetry at the University of Santo Tomas Center for Creative Writing and Studies, 1998-2005.

He was also a guest poet and lecturer at Wordfeast, the First Singapore Poetry Festival in 2004. He has won Palanca prizes.

"Textual Relations" is available at Aeon Books in Katipunan, Popular Bookstore in T. Morato, Solidaridad, PowerBooks, National Book Store, Bound Bookshop, Fully Booked, and UP Press bookstores in UP Diliman; Baguio and Davao.

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25 March 2007

Mind magician Tony Buzan comes to Manila

Through mind-mapping, one can sharpen memory and creative skills

By Dexter R. Matilla
Contributor

IT IS GENERALLY BELIEVED that humans use only a small portion of their brain. While this belief is yet to be completely proven, there is a method used by professionals that can help tap the brain's full potential as a powerful tool of creative intelligence. It's called "mind-mapping."

Tony Buzan, author of such best-selling books as "The Power of Creative Intelligence," "Mind Maps at Work," "Age Proof Your Brain" and "The Power of Verbal Intelligence" will be in the country to share how mind-mapping works.

The Institute for Training and Development, which brought "Chicken Soup for the Soul" author Jack Canfield to Manila last year, is bringing Buzan to the Mandarin Oriental Hotel for the workshop "Unleash the Genius of Creativity and Innovation" on March 26-27.

Described as a "Swiss army knife for the brain," mind-mapping is a tool that can help anyone in management, brainstorming sessions and problem-solving.

Research on memory shows that the primary way humans remember is by imagination and association. The words trigger the images and the way to embed them in one's memory is by using arrows, sizes, dimensions and the like.

"All the great ancient memory systems were based on this imagistic view," Buzan said. "The Greek system of mnemonics, for one, had this concept at its core."

Memory technique

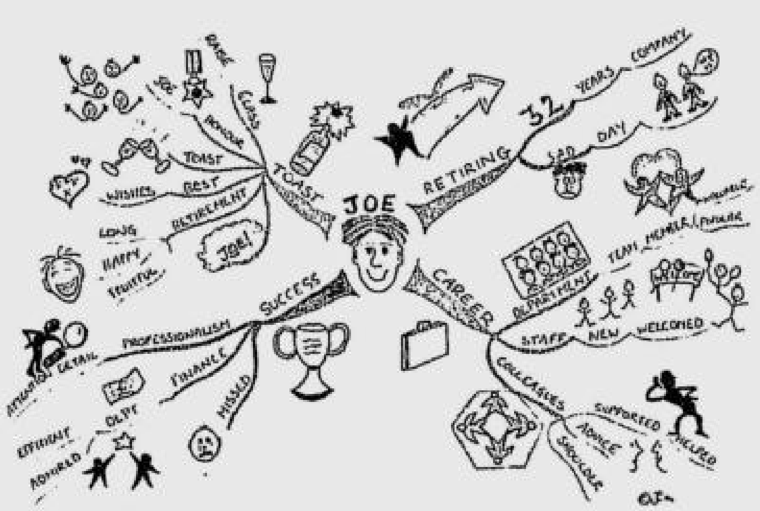
Buzan's fascination with mnemonics led him to the development of the mind map. Initially invented as a multidimensional memory technique, the mind map, Buzan discovered with the help of his brother, professor Barry Buzan, could be applied to literally any area of mental activity, including memory, creative thinking, planning, decision-making, communication and writing.

Buzan relates how, as a young kid, he first sought ways to improve his mental skills. He started speed-reading.

"I immediately began training my eyes and brain to accelerate the rate at which I absorbed written information," Buzan said. "Within a fairly short period of time, I was able to read over 400 words per minute with good comprehension. This was my first realization that my brain was, indeed, somewhat like a muscle, and that its strength could be increased. Speed-reading showed me the way and must therefore be considered as one of my most important mental developments."

Buzan was able to magnify the power of his short-, medium- and long-term recall. He then immediately began to try his memory skills on all his studies, which enabled him to maintain his class standing.

"I was thus able to spend a lot more time on athletic, social, mind sport and other pursuits," he said.



AN EXAMPLE of mind-mapping

Brainy poet

Born in London, Buzan is a prize-winning poet and founder of the Brain Trust Charity, The World Memory Championships and the World Championships of the Brain. He has been hailed as "the biggest name in memory" by the New Yorker magazine.

A co-founder of the Mind Sports Olympiad and originator of the Mental Literacy concept, Buzan has become an international media star over the last 30 years.

TONY Buzan

He has been featured in satellite broadcasts on television, video and radio programs, including the "Use Your Head" series on BBC, the "Open Mind" series on ITV and the recent "In Search of Genius" series on BBC2.

Most of Buzan's teaching generally divides up into general awareness of the extensive capabilities and capacities of the brain and its functions, memory skills, reading skills, mind-map note-taking, creativity and how brain functions can be improved over time.

His works have been published in over 125 countries and translated into 32 languages with millions of copies sold.

He has also lectured in over 73 countries to audiences ranging from kindergarten children to university graduates, Olympic athletes and senior executives of Fortune magazine's Top 500 companies.

Personal goals

While the methods are generally useful for executives and adults wishing to develop their mental skills in achieving grand personal goals, Buzan explains that children as young as 5 years old can start learning the mind map.

Buzan's experience in dealing with disadvantaged students, first-class Oxbridge graduates, and top corporate leaders all over the world and government officials bore the realization that mind-mapping can be done as long as one is determined to learn.

Buzan promises to share the secrets of using mind maps in unleashing the fluency, flexibility and originality of thought that enables infinite creativity and innovation in one's work and life during the two-day "transformational" event.

Participants can expect a greater awareness of creative and mental capabilities. They will learn how to generate creative ideas at least four times as fast as perceived possible, and how to direct creative powers to the development of new corporate products, services, work processes, systems and business models.

Tony Buzan will hold a book-signing session at PowerBooks in Greenbelt 4, Makati, on March 24, 6 p.m. Call 7576428-29.

For workshop information and registration, call 8877428.

E-mail the author at dxmatilla @yahoo.com

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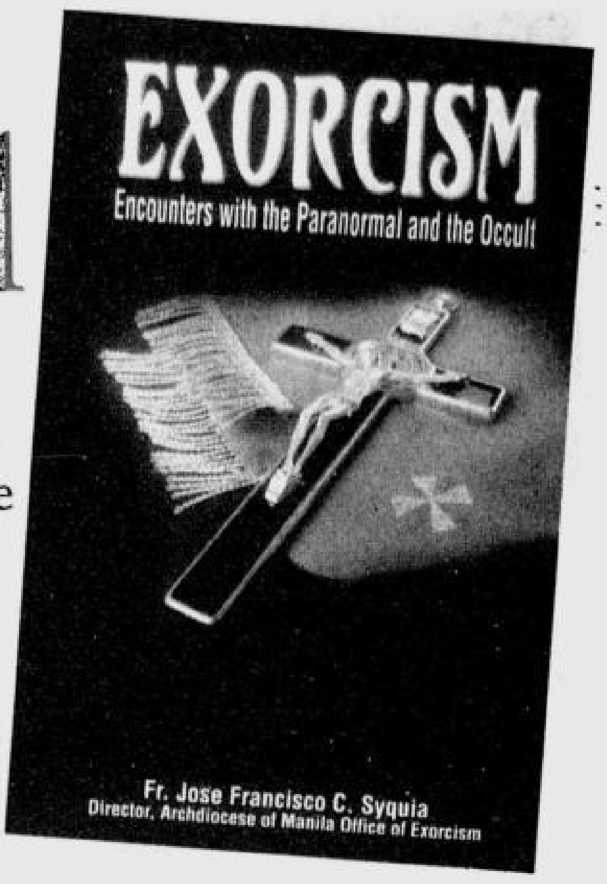
Face to face with the devil

By Lito B. Zulueta

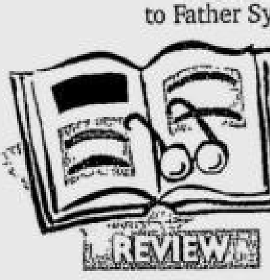
A practicing exorcist warns about New Age excesses that may become pathways to demonic possession


EXORCISM
Encounters with the Paranormal and the Occult
Fr. Jose Francisco C. Syquia
Director, Archdiocese of Manila Office of Exorcism

THE SELF-ASSURED WOMAN-doctor was accompanied by her father. She had been experiencing paranormal attacks ever since, in the euphoria of a recent professional achievement, she gave thanks to God. Previous to that, the young physician had practiced the occult and confessed to being friends with several *duwende* (elves). An occultist warned her not to pursue her plan of going to the Roman Catholic priest, Fr. Jose Francisco C. Syquia, head of the Manila Archdiocese's Office of Exorcism. But since nobody could really help her, she made up her mind to see the priest.

Interviewing her, Father Syquia noticed her eyes were glazed. Not a good sign, he thought, banking on his former encounters with people in demonic possession who would usually appear reptilian. Much later, the father of the physician complained that something was making his hair stand, and the priest's assistants, lay people who had the gift of detecting spirits, said they were noticing "dark spirits" hovering in the room.

But since the interview was only meant to build a probable case of possession, Father Syquia ended the interview, urging the woman to throw away her occult paraphernalia and to start wearing and praying the sacramentals (the rosary, brown scapular, etc.). The woman then asked the priest to bless the water they had brought along. He obliged and started the prayer of blessing.



"Stop!" the woman before him ordered, in a voice that was strong, brash and unearthly. When he looked up, his suspicion was confirmed. "I was not looking at the eyes of a young woman," Father Syquia writes. "Her eyes were now alien and snake-like, filled with arrogance."

Suddenly, Father Syquia was face to face with the devil. The woman exhibited all the traits of what Fr. Jordan Aumann, the Dominican spiritual master, would call as "diabolical possession": psychiatric manifestation (her inner turmoil owing to the paranormal assaults); parapsyshological phenomena (the audible and the serpent-like metamorphoses); and aversion to the sacred (the vehement reaction to the blessing of the water).

The riveting account is just one of several diabolical conflicts in Fr. Syquia's "Exorcism: Encounters with the Paranormal and the Occult" (2006, Shepherd's Voice Publications). The book is significant because it is written by a practicing exorcist, and it comes with the imprimatur of Cardinal Gaudencio Rosales.

Moreover, the introduction is written by the chief exorcist of Manila, the Spanish Capuchin Fr. Mateo Goldaraz.

It is from Father Goldarez that the reader learns that exorcism is a canonical privilege; it is a "minor order" given to select priests by bishops. "Now that I am 65 years old," he notes about his appointment by Cardinal Rosales as chief exorcist, "God wants me to share in this ministry." He adds: "This simple but mysterious assignment is a great grace for me; it has introduced me to a ministry that has been practically lost through the years of 'normal' pastoral work in the Church."

Exile and the devil

The remarks by Father Goldaraz should show that over the last decades, exorcism—and along with it, the devil—has been practically banished from Catholic practice because it has been perceived to be a creature of the Middle Ages.

Although a post-conciliar document of the Second Vatican Council reaffirmed the teaching on the devil and the practice of exorcism, the positivistic outlook has prevailed in the Church.

Fr. Gabriel Amorth, until recently the chief Vatican exorcist, is quoted in this book as complaining about the forced exile of the devil and exorcism from the Church: "Is this because bishops and priests do not care about this? Or is it because bishops and priests do not believe in the necessity and efficacy of this ministry?'

Judging from the imprimatur given to Father Syquia's book by Asia's most important bishop, and the imprimatur previously given as well to Father Amorth's books on the subject by the bishop of Rome, it seems the Church now cares.

And why shouldn't the Church care? Father Amorth administered 20,000 exorcisms in just eight years! Jesuit exorcist Fr. Malachi Martin said there had been "a steady rise" in exorcisms—a 750 percent increase alone from the 1960s up to the mid-1970s. Exorcisms done in mental asylums showed that many severe "nut" cases were really demonic possessions.

Even M. Scott Peck, the non-Catholic psychiatrist and author, has revealed in his recent book "Glimpse of the Devil" that he has taken part in exorcisms and insisted that the devil is alive and well in a world that denies his existence and is behind many severe cases of psychosis and sociopathology today.

But the fact that it took more than 30 years after Vatican II for the Church to revise and reissue the Roman Ritual of Exorcism, the 400-year-old manual of prayers used by the exorcist to drive out demons, should show an apparent conspiracy of silence to hide the devil's workings in the world.

Authoritative

Father Syquia's book is therefore important because it adds to the rather meager literature on a controversial practice in the Church. It takes its place among such classics of Father Amorth's and Monsignor Corrado Balducci's works on the subject.

To be sure, it's the first book on the subject by a Filipino, written with the ardor and idealism of youth (the author is only in his 40s) as well as the scholastic but practical intelligence of a scholar and thinker. It also comes with the authority of experience.

Father Syquia took up philosophical studies at San Carlos Major Seminary and the University of Santo Tomas Ecclesiastical Faculty of Philosophy. He received his theological training from the UST Ecclesiastical Faculty of Sacred Theology and obtained his Masters in Psychology from the UST Graduate School. He obtained his licentiate (masters) in Theology from the Angelicum, the famous pontifical university of the Dominicans in Rome.

Philosophically and theologically, therefore, Father Syquia draws from Thomistic rational psychology and spiritual theology to probe into the invisible world of the devil and its workings. For example, he quotes the Filipino Dominican Fr. Manuel T. Pinon on occultism as involving "the cult of spirits and a rejection of the Creation in favor of the evil spirits, which are an abomination of God."

Similarly, Syquia draws useful lessons to be used against the devil from spiritual theology, such as the classic "Three Ages of the Interior Life" by the great Dominican, Fr. Reginald Garrigou Lagrange, who wrote: "The devil can produce either nervous diseases or exterior phenomena analogous to those of neuroses."

The devil can even produce fake trances like those induced in New Age transcendental meditation sessions, as warned by another Dominican Thomist, the late great Father Aumann, who wrote in his book "Spiritual Theology" about the "diabolical trance state" as "a falsification of mystical ecstasy caused by an evil spirit."

Very practical book

Father Syquia also shares the practical bent of St. Thomas Aquinas, who wrote his major works, the "Summa Theologica" and "Summa Contra Gentiles," as textbooks or instructionals to be used by Dominican students.

Thus, his book is basically a summary of cases that would reveal the dangerous excesses of people who are into occultism and the New Age movement, which exorcists and spiritual masters like him have always warned are pathways for the devil to possess and rule their largely ignorant practitioners.

"The first deadly secret of the New Age is that it never tells you the real identity of these spirits," Father Syquia warns. The spirits—be they elementals, *duwende* or ghosts—are really fallen angels, the devils waging a war of attrition against God and his creation.

It is the practical dimensions of "Exorcism" that make the work relevant and useful. The book contains instructive cases not only on demonic possession and New Age dangers, but also on folk-religious excesses, haunted houses and personal spiritual warfare.

The bibliography encourages readers to read more authoritative and scholarly literature, and the several appendices are very helpful: They provide prayers and techniques to deliver oneself or one's home from malevolent spirits. One appendix is a "concise handbook on exorcism and deliverance" that includes techniques for warding off spells and curses, and another provides a manual of powerful and beautiful prayers for spiritual warfare.

Aside from its utility, the book is a wellspring of practical wisdom. The concluding chapter reaffirms what all the great spiritual masters of the Church have emphasized through the centuries: that driving away demons is not the exorcist's work, it's God's. That demons are expelled not through the power of the exorcist, but through the authority of God. As Father Syquia declares: "Only Jesus and always Jesus."

"Exorcism: Encounters with the Paranormal and the Occult," by Fr. Jose Francisco C. Syquia, will be launche, March 22, 5:30 p.m., at the Santuario de San Antonio Parish Center. Call 4117874 up to 76. E-mail sales@shepherdsvoice.com.ph.

Iligan workshop invites applications

THE NATIONAL COMMISSION for Culture and Arts (NCCA), Mindanao Creative Writers Group Inc., and Mindanao State University-Iligan Institute of Technology's Office of the Vice Chancellor for Research and Extension (OVCRE) are accepting applications from writers to the 14th Iligan National Writers Workshop (INWW) to be held May 21-24 in Iligan City.

Fifteen slots, five each from Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao are available for writing fellowships to the INWW.

Applicants are required to submit five poems, one short story, or one-act play in Filipino, English or in Cebuano, Hiligaynon, Kinaray-a, Waray and Chavacano (with English or Filipino translations) along with the applicant's biodata, two 2x2 photos and a certification that his/her work is original. For short stories or plays, please submit a hard copy and a CD with the manuscripts encoded in MS Word. Unpublished works are preferred and those applicants who have attended at least one regional writers workshop.

Writing fellows will be given free board and lodging and travel allowance. Applications must be postmarked on or before March 30. No applications or manuscripts will be accepted if sent by fax or e-mail. Applicants are also advised to keep copies of their manuscripts since these will not be returned.

Send all applications to the 14th INWW director, Christine Godinez-Ortega, c/o OVCRE, MSU-IIT, Iligan. Call (063) 3516131; or e-mail ovcremepc@sulat.msuiit.edu.ph/cherlyadlawan@yahoo.com.

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Tamer than US counterpart

'Philippines Next Top Model': All it has right now is potential

HOST Ruffa Gutierrez is articulate, but still a little unwieldy. RUDY ESPERAS

By Oliver M. Pulumbarit
Contributor

REVIEW

THE NEW SHOW "PHILIPPINES' NEXT TOP Model" looks and feels considerably tamer than its US counterpart. In the Tyra Banks-hosted reality show "America's Next Top Model," it's easier to know from the start how enjoyably cutthroat the competition is going to be, as many of the ambitious hopefuls aren't shy or hesitant in being overtly competitive early on.

This local iteration of that source program is able to recreate and recapture some important things, but it takes a more conservative deviation. No, it's not lively yet ... and, gee, it's hard to tell the girls apart.

Stir it up

Not that the new version doesn't show promise. The built-in potential is there; the show just needs to tap into that and really stir things up. Fans of the American show may quickly feel disappointed, because many of the contestants—apart from the fact that many of them look alike—seem wanting in personality.

It's obvious that the show is aiming high, and that could only be a good thing.

TAMER/ F2

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HOW IT ALL

Miners, log farmers hac worn heavy work pants but the pa never because seams pocke woul rip ope

In 18 Lev

Strauss gave Jaco Davis, a obscur Reno tailo $3 to mak a pair c trousers sturdy Davis came up with the idea c puttin Copper rive to strength the pan Eleven Co rivets were use make the trouse sturdy at pock corners and oth points. Levi Str and Jacob Davis then patented the idea of Copper riveted jeans, which became the prototype for the legendary Levi's® 501 jeans.

COPPER NUGGETS

All that glitters is not gold. Some may think Copper is the poor distant relative of gold, but did you know that Copper is rarer than precious gold? Copper is the only metal other than gold that has natural color. Other metals are either gray or white. It is man's oldest metal, dating back more than 10,000 years. 10,000 years ago, cave dwellers used Copper axes as tools for survival. Today, surgeons save lives and precious bloo by using Copper-clad scal Copp tubing w

are than 5,00 One of the found in Isr Copper instead of animal skins. The scroll contains clues to a still undiscovered treasure. Copper was associated with the Greek goddess Aphrodite in mythology and alchemy, owing to its lustrous beauty and its ancient use in producing mirrors. Copper is the standard benchmark for electrical conductivity. It conducts electrical current better than any other metal except silver. Copper cookware is regarded as the best by chefs around the world because of its advantages in high heat transfer (the highest of any material used in cooking) uniform he The

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MOTIF

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The seasonal line will bear the same insignias plus print detail on pocket linings for all jeans, and on the inside waistband of women's jeans. It will also feature leather flaps over back pockets and leather patches on pocket scoops.

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The jeans come in mid-to dark-tone classic finishing over red cast denim, with subtle contrasts and effects that include exaggerated whiskers, paper crease marks, and a hint of scraping. The finishes come in names that estern wboy iration, h as ange County, Gold Rush, and American Cowboy.

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Tamer than US . . .

From page F1

Still, watch any episode of Tyra Banks' long-running program and it's easy to see just how much fun such a program can be. "PNTM," hosted by former beauty queen Ruffa Gutierrez, doesn't feel that way—at least not yet.

Many semifinalists are obviously jittery—even after the being interviewed by the show's panel. A subsequent photo shoot challenge, however, yields several talents.

While seriously missing a clownish figure that J. Alexander has made archetypal, "Philippines Next Top Model" isn't totally humorless. Of course, it would have been great if model-comedienne Wilma Doesnt, who was a panel member for a time, had more things to do and funnier stuff to say.

On the bright side, there's already a free-flowing vibe, as the local judges are competent and knowledgeable. Aside from Gutierrez, the judges are fashion director Robbie Carmona, advertising and fashion photographer Xander Angeles, and Preview magazine editor-in-chief Pauline Juan. The panel members are undoubtedly polite—the worst they've called one girl's photo is "boring," but they can elucidate on remarks well, and to the point.

Hit-and-miss

So far, Gutierrez's hosting is a case of hit-and-miss. She comes off as a little unwieldy when required to be all-smiles as she greets and assigns tasks to the girls—her spiels sound a little stiff and scripted. But she's quite good and open when she speaks her mind during deliberations and interviews with the aspirants.

There aren't any of the *mestiza* contestants that local show biz seems to be teeming with. The select few here are predom-

TAMER/ F4

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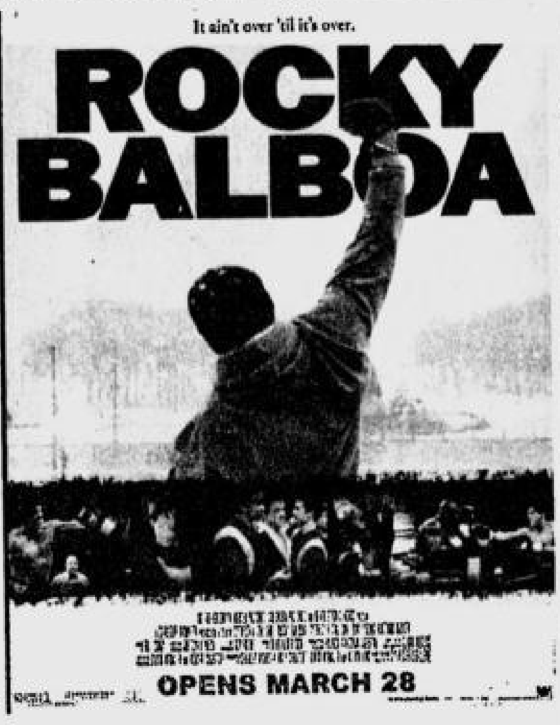

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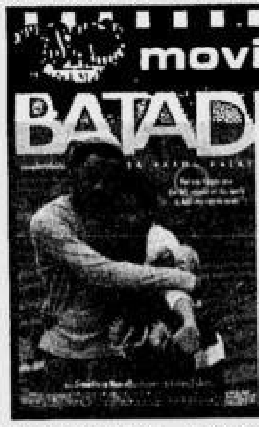

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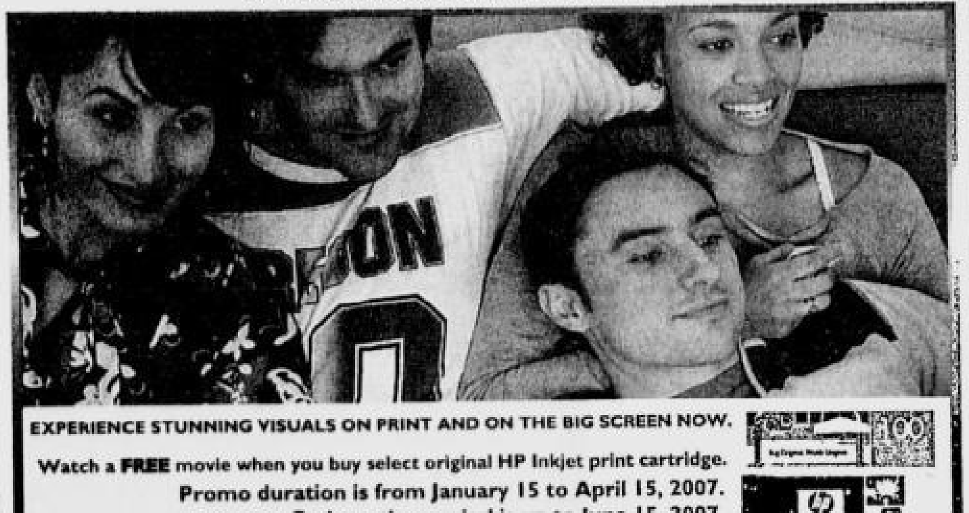

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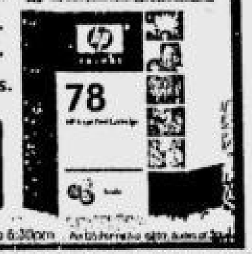

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1 HAPPY HEARTS
2 GHOST RIDER
3 RESERVED
4 THE HITCHER

Masagana CINEMA
(Pasay) tel 833.3290 / 833.3274
1 HAPPY HEARTS
2 THE MESSENGER
3 YOU GOT ME

Center Mall Cinema
Baguio Center Mall, Magsaysay Avenue (Baguio City) tel (074)- (4449346)
1 300
2 MUSIC & LYRICS

Jade Cinema
(Angeles City) tel (045) 887.5001 to 03
1 300
2 HAPPY HEARTS
3 EPIC MOVIE
4 BECAUSE I SAID SO

Centre Plaza Cinema
(Balanga, Bataan) tel (047) 237.7007
1 PRIMEVAL
2 YOU GOT ME

EASTWOOD CINEMAS
(Eastwood City Walk 2, Eastwood City E. Rodriguez Jr. Ave (C-5) Quezon City) tel 687.6963 or 72
1 (DOLBY) DREAM GIRL
2 (DOLBY) 300
3 (DOLBY) BECAUSE I SAID SO
4 (DOLBY) PATHFINDER

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Cinema 2000 Waltermart
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2 THE MESSENGER
3 300
4

Cinema 2000 Pavilion Mall
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3 RESERVED
4 RESERVED

Cinema 2000 Cinemagix
(Urdaneta) tel(075) 568.6771
1 BLOOD CHOCOLATE
2 YOU GOT ME
3 PRIMEVAL

Cinema 2000 Metrotown
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2 YOU GOT ME
3 GHOST RIDER
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(Plaridel) tel (044) 795.3320
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2 HAPPY HEARTS
3 YOU GOT ME

Cinema 2000 Waltermart
(Gapan) tel. (044) 4867736
1 PRIMEVAL
2 YOU GOT ME

Lianas Cinema
(Pasig) tel 640.4748
1 WILD BUTTERFLY
2 GHOST RIDER

Lianas Cinema
(Alabang) tel 850.1276
1 BRIDGE TO TERABITTHIA
2 FIRST TIME
3 TOO MUCH FLESH
4 ASK THE DUSK

Lianas MovieCity
(Calamba) tel (049) 545.7202
1 300
2 U-BELT
3 HAPPY HEARTS
4 SHAOLIN VS' EVIL DEAD
5 THE MESSENGER

Fiesta World Mall
(Lipa) tel (043) 981.0790
1 BRIDGE TO TERABITTHIA
2 FLUSHED AWAY
3 MUSIC & LYRICS
4 YOU GOT ME

Berma Cinema
(Baclaran) tel 879.2030 / 879.2029
1 ASK THE DUSK
2 THE RETURN

MOVIES / SCHEDULES / PRICES SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT PRIOR NOTICE

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For inquiries, call:
687-6963
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1	DREAM GIRLS 2:20, 5:20, 8:20, 11:10 PG-13
2	300 12:15, 2:45, 5:35, 8:25, 11:10 R-13
3	BECAUSE I SAID SO 1:20, 3:45, 6:10, 8:35, 11:00 R-13
4	PATHFINDER 1:20, 3:45, 6:10, 8:35, 11:00 R-13

SHANG CINEPLEX

① BECAUSE I SAID SO
MTRCB PG-13
2:45, 5:10, 7:35, 10:00

② 300
MTRCB R-13
1:30, 4:20, 7:10, 10:00

③ ROCKY BALBOA
MTRCB PG-13
1:00, 3:15, 5:30, 7:45, 10:00

④ DREAMGIRLS
MTRCB PG-13
1:00, 4:00, 7:00, 10:00

PREMIERE THEATRE
PATHFINDER
MTRCB R-13
2:45, 5:10, 7:35, 10:00

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PATHFINDER R13 1:10,3:30,5:50,8:10	BECAUSE I SAID SO PG13 1:50,4:00,6:10, :20,10:30	ROCKY BALBOA PG13 1:25,3:40,5:55, 8:10,10:25
DREAMGIRLS PG13 2:30,5:10,7:50,10:30	GOOD SHEPHERD R13 1:20,4:35 PURSUIT OF HAPPYNESS G 7:50,10:20	300 R13 12:30,3:00,5:30, 8:00,10:30

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CINEMA 1 PATHFINDER
10:30 , 12:50 , 3:10
5:30 7:50 10:10
R-13

CINEMA 2 DREAMGIRLS
12:00 , 2:45 , 5:25
8:05 , 10:35
PG-13

DOLBY DIGITAL SURROUND-EX

PROMENADE
GREENHILLS
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NOW SHOWING

CINEMA 3 BECAUSE I SAID SO
11:00 , 1:20 , 3:40
6:00 , 8:20 , 10:35
PG-13

CINEMA 4 ROCKY BALBOA
10:30 , 12:50,3:10
5:30 , 7:50 , 10:10
PG-13

CINEMA 5 300
11:00 , 1:45 , 4:30
7:15 , 10:00
R-13

TICKET PRICES & SCREENING TIME SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT PRIOR NOTICE. FOR CINEMA INQUIRIES, CALL: 722 4496.

MUSIC MUSEUM

March 16 & 23 , 2007	SITTI ... IN LOVE	8:30 PM
March 30 , 2007	[illegible]	8:30 PM
May 25 , 2007	CHRISTIAN BAUTISTA	8:00 PM

TEATRINO
PROMENADE GREENHILLS

EVERY MONDAY	DANCE NIGHT	7:00 PM
March 15 , 22 , 29 , 2007	RAYMUND LAUCHENGCO	8:30 PM

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'300' strengthens links between filmmaking and video gaming

VIEWFINDER

Nestor U. Torre

THE BIG DEAL IN MAINSTREAM cinema these days is the period action-adventure epic, "300," which grossed some $70 million on its opening weekend in the US. That's a record-breaker, especially for an R-rated movie.

More instructively, "300" has a relatively small budget, due to its extensive use of "blue screen" and digital technique.

The fact that it's making much more than many more expensive epics makes its achievement all the more remarkable, and could influence filmmaking techniques and procedures in the months and years to come.

In addition, its star, **Gerard Butler**, could be the next big thing in Hollywood.

Next Crowe?

As he promotes the movie on top TV talk and show biz programs, he's invariably asked to shout his signature line from the film, "This—is—Sparta!," which he obediently bellows with glass-shattering ferocity and volume.

Some pundits even predict that he could become as popular as **Russell Crowe**, whose own stellar trajectory was boosted by another costume action-adventure epic, "Gladiator."

Those radiant blurbs are great, but how does "300" shape up as a *film*?

We caught it last Thursday, and were initially stuck by its dramatic and powerful images, quite a number of them digitally enhanced.

Iconic images

The striking and even iconic images were quite in keeping with the movie's legendary style of storytelling, and the "operatic" acting style employed by the cast was similarly apt for the larger-than-life tale about a few good Spartans' moral victory over literally hundreds of thousands of foes.

After a while, however, the story proved to be too slim to support the movie's lush visualization. As King Leonides (Butler) and his 300 Spartans faced the man-god Xerxes' gargantuan army, the power of the movie's high-strung performances and over-the-top images started to pall.

To generate added interest, Xerxes' army was compartmentalized into exotically different battalions coming from "a hundred nations."

Dissonance

Instead of energizing the film, however, this sequential parade of soldiers dressed in wildly different uniforms looked like a circus on parade. So much for a genuine sense of fear and trembling...

We also noted a dissonance be-

'300'/F4

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ROCKY BALBOA 12:40 / 3:00 / 5:20 / 7:40 / 10:00	300 2:05 / 4:35 / 7:05 / 9:50	BECAUSE I SAID SO 12:10 / 2:30 / 4:50 / 7:10 / 9:30	Globe PLATINUM CINEMA
PATHFINDER 12:10 / 2:35 / 5:00 / 7:25 / 9:50	DREAMGIRLS 1:30 / 4:10 / 6:50 / 9:30	LITTLE MISS SUNSHINE 2:10 / 4:40 / 7:10 / 9:40	
HAPPY HEARTS 1:00 / 3:10 / 5:20 / 7:30 / 9:40	YOU GOT ME 1:00 / 3:10 / 5:20 / 7:30 / 9:40	PURSUIT OF HAPPYNESS 3:40 / 9:40 THE GOOD SHEPHERD 12:20 / 6:20	300 1:30 / 4:00 / 6:30 / 9:00

Ali MALL 5

1 300 12:30 / 3:00 / 5:30 / 8:00	2 PATHFINDER 11:55 / 2:05 / 4:15 / 6:25 / 8:35	3 ROCKY BALBOA 11:30 / 1:50 / 4:10 / 6:30 / 8:50
4 HAPPY HEARTS 11:55 / 2:05 / 4:15 / 6:25 / 8:35	5 YOU GOT ME 11:55 / 2:05 / 4:15 / 6:25 / 8:35	DOLBY DIGITAL dts SDDS

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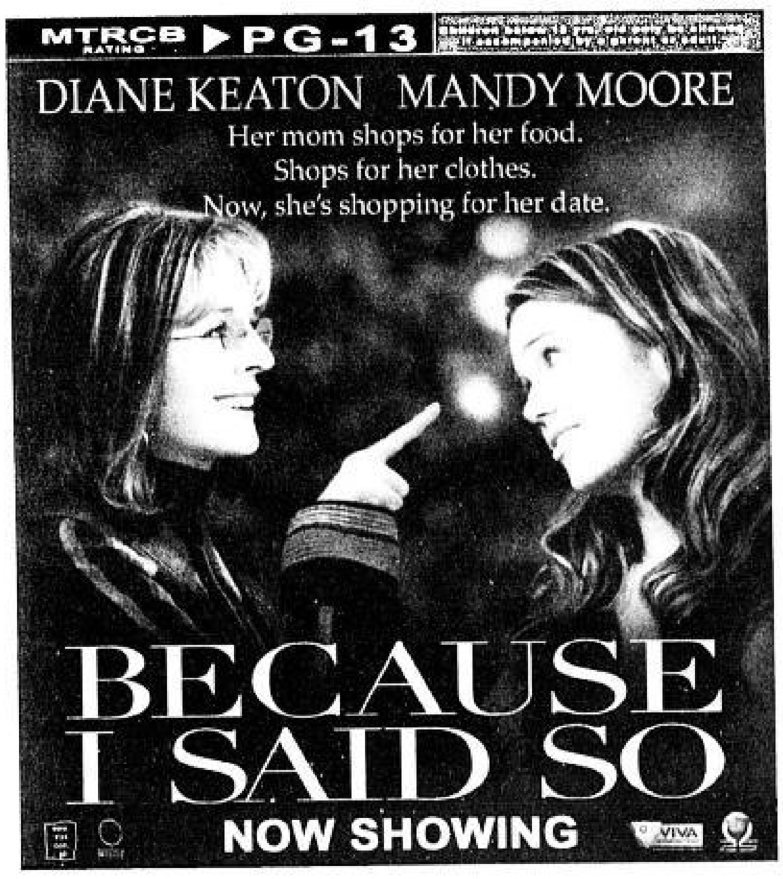

MTRCB RATING ▶PG-13
DIANE KEATON MANDY MOORE
Her mom shops for her food.
Shops for her clothes.
Now, she's shopping for her date.
BECAUSE I SAID SO
NOW SHOWING
VIVA

R-13
IN THE MOST HORRIFYING TRADITION
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MILLENNIUM FILMS PRESENTS FOR HÖGER HUMAN SERVICES MEDIEN & PERSONAL GMBH A FILM BY J.S. CARDONE "ZOMBIES"
LORI HEURING SCOUT TAYLOR COMPTON CHLOE MORETZ GEOFFREY LEWIS, MARTIN MCDOUGALL CHRIS JAMBA, CRAIG VYE, JULIE ROGERS AND BEN CROSS
CASTING BY FERNE CASSEL, C.S.A., JEREMY ZIMMERMAN COSTUME DESIGNER OJANINA DAYKOUCHEVA PRODUCTION DESIGNER CARLOS DA SILVA MUSIC BY TIM JONES EDITED BY ALAIN JAKUBOWICZ DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY EMIL TOPUZOV ASC EXECUTIVE PRODUCER JACK GILARDI JR. EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS AVI LERNER DANNY DIMBORT TREVOR SHORT JOHN THOMPSON EWERHARD ED ENGELS STORY BY BOAZ DAVIDSON SCREENPLAY BY BEN NEDIVI PRODUCED BY ANTON HÖGER PRODUCED BY BOAZ DAVIDSON DIRECTED BY J.S. CARDONE
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G1 GLORIETTA 1	1 PATHFINDER	2 300	3 ROCKY BALBOA	4 HAPPY HEART
G4 GLORIETTA 4	1 ROCKY BALBOA	2 300	3 THX THE PURSUIT OF HAPPYNESS GUARANTEED SEATS	
	4 PATHFINDER	5 DREAMGIRLS	6 NOTES ON A SCANDAL	7 BECAUSE I SAID SO
GB1 GREENBELT 1	1 BECAUSE I SAID SO	2 300		
GB3 GREENBELT 3	1 THX ROCKY BALBOA GUARANTEED SEATS	2 THX 300 GUARANTEED SEATS		
	3 PATHFINDER GUARANTEED SEATS	4 DREAMGIRLS GUARANTEED SEATS	5 BECAUSE I SAID SO GUARANTEED SEATS	
ATC ALABANG TOWN CENTER	1 THX ROCKY BALBOA GUARANTEED SEATS	2 300		
	3 BECAUSE I SAID SO	4 DREAMGIRLS	5 PATHFINDER	
ACC AYALA CENTER CEBU	1 300	2 BECAUSE I SAID SO	3 THE GOOD SHEPHERD	4 EPIC MOVIE
M2 MARKET! MARKET!	1 ROCKY BALBOA	2 DREAMGIRLS		
	3 BECAUSE I SAID SO	4 SIQUIJOR	5 HAPPY HEART	

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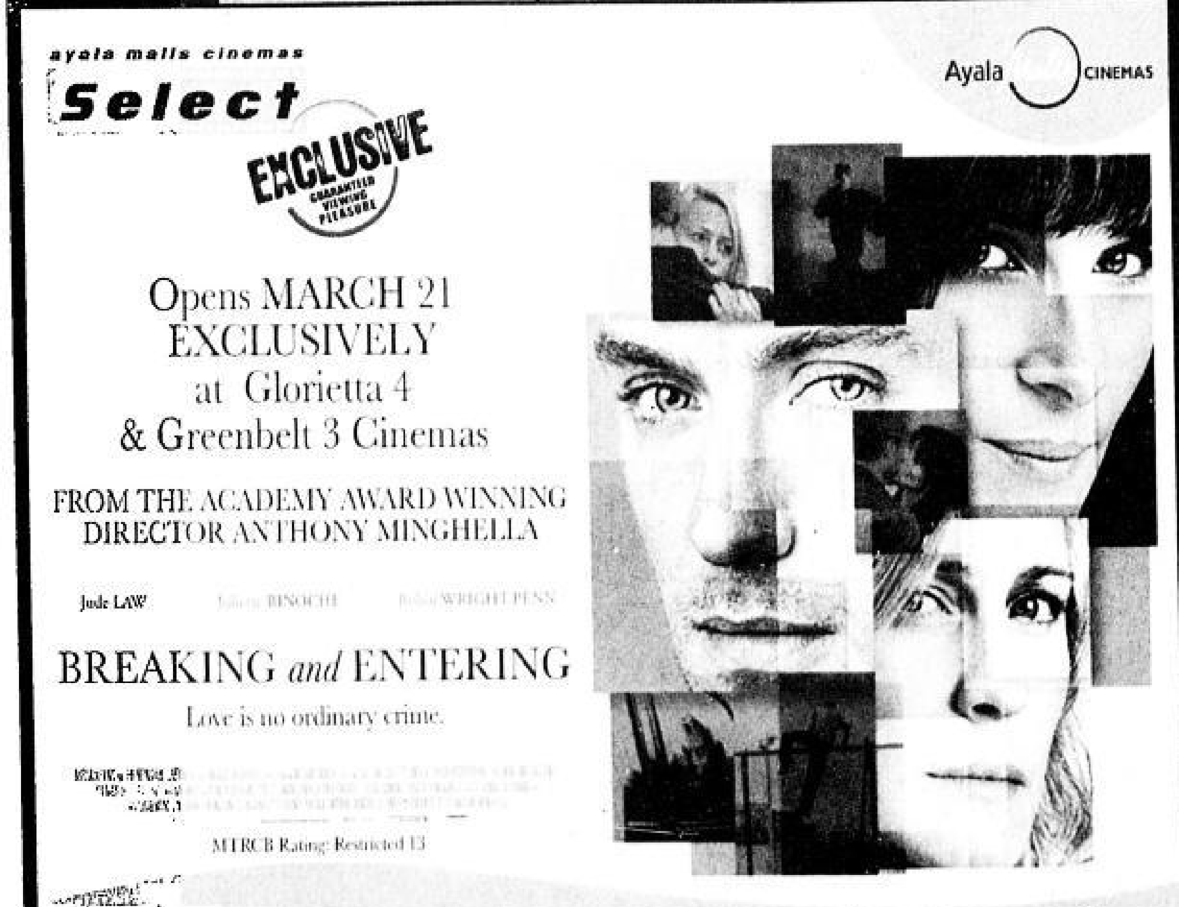

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GALLERIA

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1 THE GOOD SHEPHERD • THX
12:00 2:30 5:00 7:30 10:00

2 300
12:00 2:30 5:00 7:30 10:00

3 PATHFINDER
12:10 2:35 5:00 7:25 9:50

4 ROCKY BALBOA Sneak Preview
12:30 2:50 5:10 7:30 9:50

5 DREAMGIRLS
12:00 2:30 5:00 7:30 10:00

6 THE PURSUIT of HAPPYNESS
12:00 2:30 5:00 7:30 10:00

7 SIQUIJOR
1:35 3:40 5:45 7:50 10:00

8 indieSine: COMPOUND
1:00 3:15 5:30 7:45 10:00

9 BECAUSE I SAID SO
1:05 3:15 5:25 7:35 9:50

10 HAPPY HEARTS
12:40 3:00 5:20 7:40 10:00

Robinsons Movieworld and Independent Filmmakers Cooperative
MARCH 14 to 20, 2007
IndieSine, Robinsons Galleria

A stunning visual achievement. COMPOUND is a contemporary thriller that deals with the complexities of love, wealth, and fear. A perfectly unexpected and well-executed ending make this a film not to be missed.
- Cleveland Intl. Film Festival

"Melrose Place", as seen through the unflinching eyes of David Lynch and Mike de Leon.
- Paul Daza, Philippine Daily Inquirer

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KILALA MO SILA

ERMITA

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1 300
12:30 2:50 5:10 7:30 10:00

2 SIQUIJOR
2:20 4:20 6:20 8:25 10:00

3 DREAMGIRLS
12:30 2:50 5:10 7:30 10:00

4 HAPPY HEARTS
12:35 2:50 5:05 7:25 10:00

5 BECAUSE I SAID SO
12:35 2:50 5:05 7:25 10:00

6 PATHFINDER
12:35 3:00 5:25 7:45 10:00

7 ROCKY BALBOA
Sneak Preview

METRO EAST

Ticket Price: P100 682-8193 / 682-8199

1 DREAMGIRLS
12:45 3:30 6:15 9:00

2 300
12:55 3:40 6:25 9:10

3 ROCKY BALBOA
Sneak Preview

4 HAPPY HEARTS
11:25 1:50 4:15 6:40 9:05

5 The PURSUIT of HAPPYNESS
1:00 3:40 6:20 9:00

6 BECAUSE I SAID SO
12:50 2:50 4:50 6:50 9:00

7 PATHFINDER
12:05 2:15 4:25 6:35 9:00

8 THE GOOD SHEPHERD
12:00 3:00 6:00 9:00

NOVALICHES

Ticket Price: P91 / P[illegible] 935-3231 / 935-3229-30

1 PATHFINDER
2 HAPPY HEARTS
4 DREAMGIRLS
4 BECAUSE I SAID SO
5 ROCKY BALBOA Sneak Preview
6 300

PIONEER

Ticket Price: P100 687-5378

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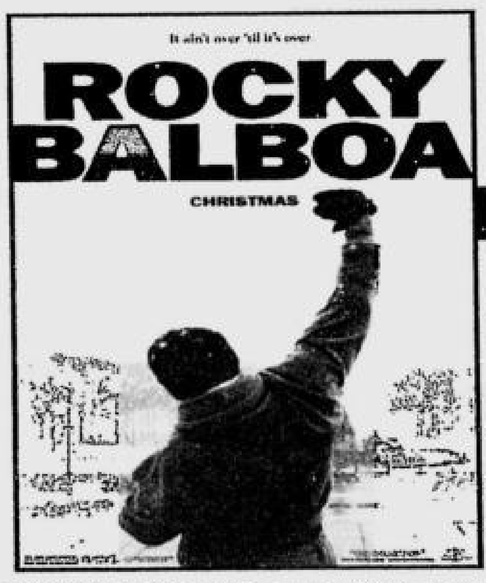
Sneak Preview

2 PATHFINDER
1:25 3:50 6:15 8:40

3 BECAUSE I SAID SO
12:05 2:15 4:25 6:35 8:40

4 DREAMGIRLS
1:15 3:45 6:15 8:40



SNEAK PREVIEWS

march 19 & 20

- galleria
- ermita
- metro east
- novaliches
- pioneer
- sta. rosa
- imus

MTRCB Rating: PG13
REGULAR Showing: MARCH 28

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2 MUSIC and LYRICS
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4 BABEL
5 YOU GOT ME

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2 BRIDGE to TERABITHIA
3 IT'S A BOY GIRL THING
4 YOU GOT ME
5 MUSIC and LYRICS

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2 300
3 HAPPY HEARTS
4 IT'S A BOY GIRL THING

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1 BECAUSE I SAID SO
2 HAPPY HEARTS
3 EPIC MOVIE
4 300

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2 HAPPY HEARTS
3 PATHFINDER
4 300
5 THE HITCHER
6 ROCKY BALBOA Sneak Preview

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1 EPIC MOVIE
2 HAPPY HEARTS
3 YOU GOT ME
4 BECAUSE I SAID SO
5 THE NUMBER 23
6 300

BACOLOD

Ticket Price: P70 (034) 441-0459

1 300
2 ARTHUR and the INVISIBLES
3 HANNIBAL RISING
4 HAPPY HEARTS
5 FLUSHED AWAY
6 YOU GOT ME

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1 300
2 HAPPY HEARTS
3 BLOOD and CHOCOLATE
4 ROME and JULIET
5 THE HITCHER
6 IT'S A BOY GIRL THING

Tamer than US counterpart

From page F2

inantly *chinita* and *morena* types (one stands out for *not* having fair skin, which made Wilma Doesnt quite happy).

On the one hand, that's how many Filipina women look; on the other, you wish each of them had something unique.

When two contestants were booted out for lack of personality and presence, one just had to wonder, "But wasn't that the case with most of them?"

Perhaps the girls will have more pep in subsequent episodes, when they're used to being on the show? Some of them were pretty good at the outdoor photo challenge, posing in bikinis on a busy city street, with hundreds of male gawkers! Some actually managed to mask their nervousness. Unfortunately, many others looked mentally absent in the final pictures.

No curiosity

Comparisons with the much livelier American series are sure to be made, so this Taglish incarnation had better shape up—soon. The two girls being booted out failed to elicit any sense of urgency or involvement for the audience that should arouse curiosity for the next episodes.

The producers should concentrate on making this search more energetic and creative. Maybe then viewers will be won over.

"Philippines' Next Top Model" airs Tuesdays, 8:30 p.m., on RPN 9.

'300' . . .

From page F3

tween the movie's panoramic battle scenes and the sequences that show Leonidas' wife trying to boost support for him at home.

The scenes in Sparta are too small and weak to sustain viewers' attention, and the queen's ostensibly powerful plea to Sparta's political leaders is a major letdown.

Each time the story goes back to the ongoing battle at the pass of Thermopylae, the production has a harder time revving up the action once more. So, it has to resort to even more far-out gimmicks, only some of which work. They included a hail of arrows coming from thousands of enemy bows—the hail is so thick that it darkens the sky.

Not unintended

But visual marvels can entrance and excite only for so long, so the movie ends rather anticlimactically. After viewing it, we feel like we've played a video game...

It turns out that the feeling is not unintended.

In fact, some observers note that one of the reasons why the movie has done so spectacularly well at the box office could be precisely its "video game look."

Plus factor

They believe that this unique look has attracted many video game fans to watch "300," thus enabling it to hit it big at the tills.

If true, this is a significant plus factor, because observers also note that the video gaming industry is now so popular that it's raking in even more money than the movie industry.

"300" could be one of the first films to subliminally establish the strengthening links between these two entertainment industries.

OPENS WEDNESDAY

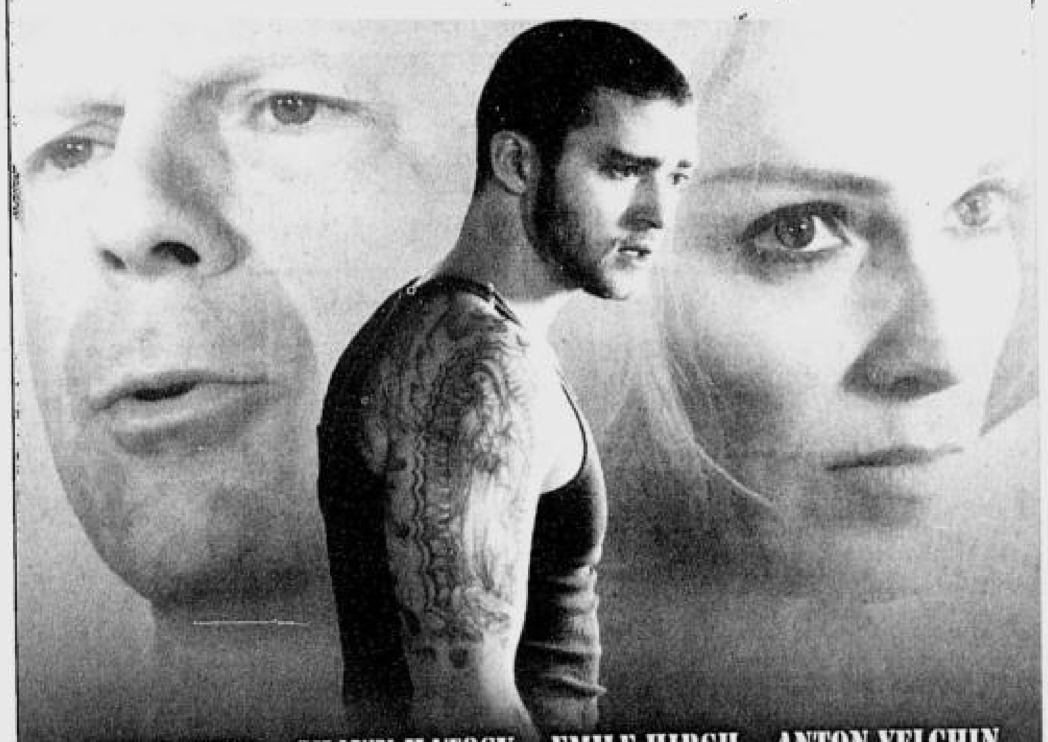
HOW DO YOU SAVE SOMEONE WHO IS ALREADY DEAD?

SANDRA BULLOCK

PREMONITION

OPENS MARCH 21

JUSTIN TIMBERLAKE WITH **SHARON STONE** AND **BRUCE WILLIS**



BEN FOSTER SHAWN HATOSY EMILE HIRSH ANTON YELCHIN

ALPHA DOG

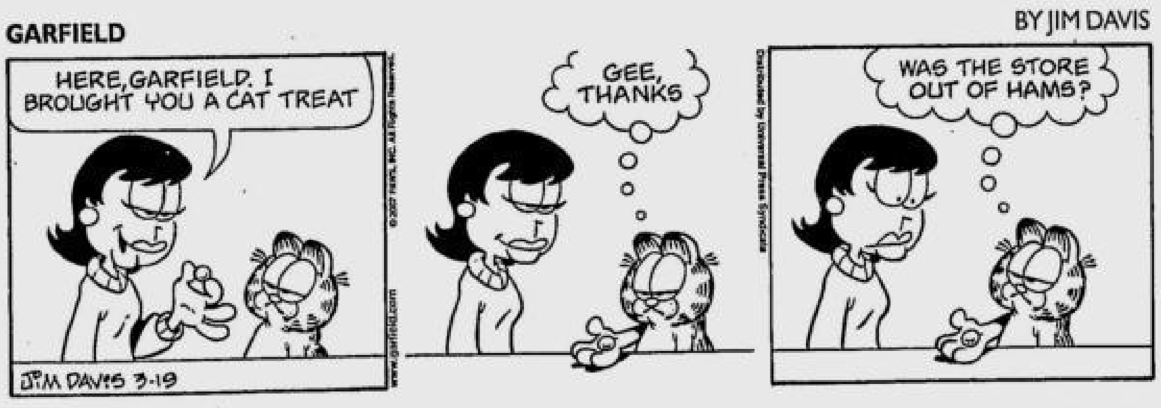
INSPIRED BY TRUE EVENTS.

Witness #21
Suspect #2
Witness #12
Witness #4

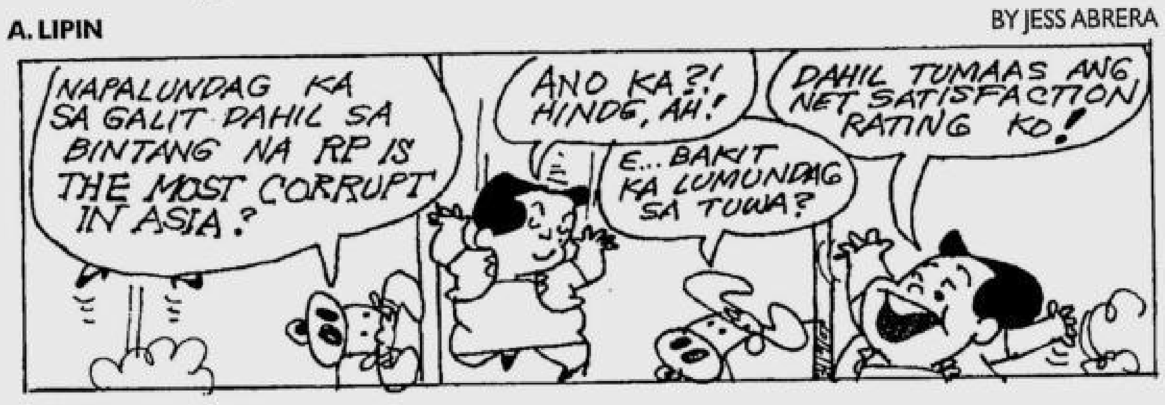
SIDNEY KIMMEL ENTERTAINMENT presents a VIP MEDIENFONDS 2 / A-MARK ENTERTAINMENT production
a NICK CASSAVETES film "ALPHA DOG" BEN FOSTER SHAWN HATOSY EMILE HIRSCH CHRISTOPHER MARQUETTE SHARON STONE JUSTIN TIMBERLAKE ANTON YELCHIN and BRUCE WILLIS
casting by MATTHEW BARRY, C.S.A. and NANCY GREEN-KEYES, C.S.A. music by AARON ZIGMAN music supervisor SPRING ASPERS costume designer MICHAEL MEHAS editor ALAN HEIM, A.C.E. production designer DOMINIC WATKINS
director of photography ROBERT FRAISSE executive producers MARINA GRASIC ANDREAS GROSCH JAN KORBELIN ANDREAS SCHMID STEVE MARKOFF ROBERT GERINGER AVRAM BUTCH KAPLAN
produced by SIDNEY KIMMEL CHUCK PACHECO written and directed by NICK CASSAVETES
INTERNATIONAL SALES BY CAPITOL FILMS

ComicRelief

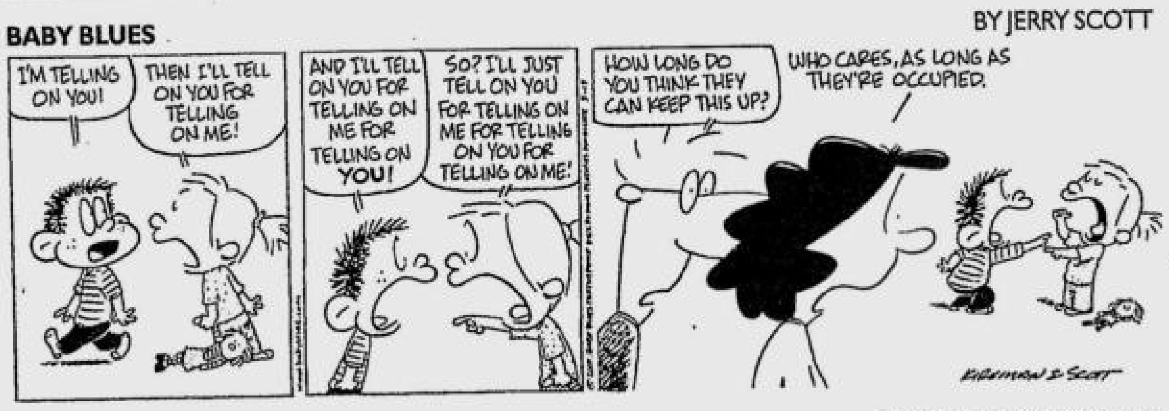
GARFIELD
BY JIM DAVIS


HERE, GARFIELD. I BROUGHT YOU A CAT TREAT
GEE, THANKS
WAS THE STORE OUT OF HAMS?
JIM DAVIS 3-19

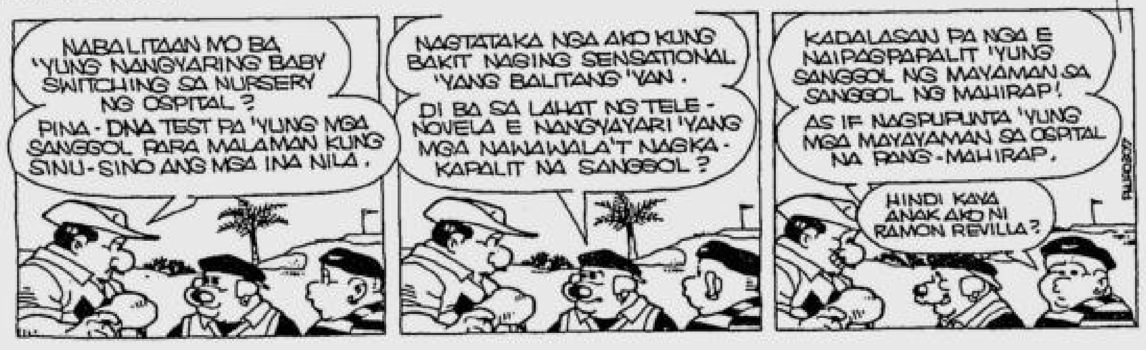
A. LIPIN
BY JESS ABRERA


NAPALUNDAG KA SA GALIT DAHIL SA BINTANG NA RP IS THE MOST CORRUPT IN ASIA?
ANO KA?! HINDE, AH!
E... BAKIT KA LUMUNDAG SA TUWA?
DAHIL TUMAAS ANG NET SATISFACTION RATING KO!

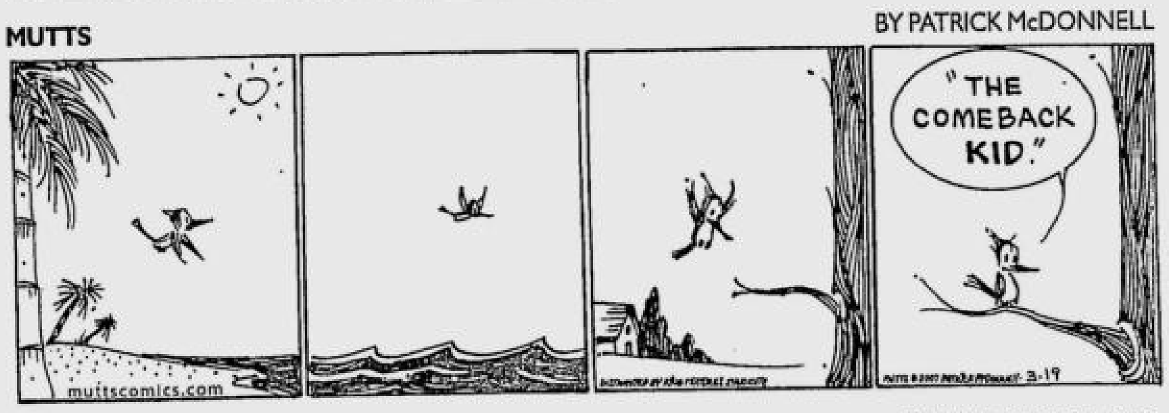
BABY BLUES
BY JERRY SCOTT


I'M TELLING ON YOU!
THEN I'LL TELL ON YOU FOR TELLING ON ME!
AND I'LL TELL ON YOU FOR TELLING ON ME FOR TELLING ON YOU!
SO? I'LL JUST TELL ON YOU FOR TELLING ON ME FOR TELLING ON YOU FOR TELLING ON ME!
HOW LONG DO YOU THINK THEY CAN KEEP THIS UP?
WHO CARES, AS LONG AS THEY'RE OCCUPIED.
KIRKMAN & SCOTT

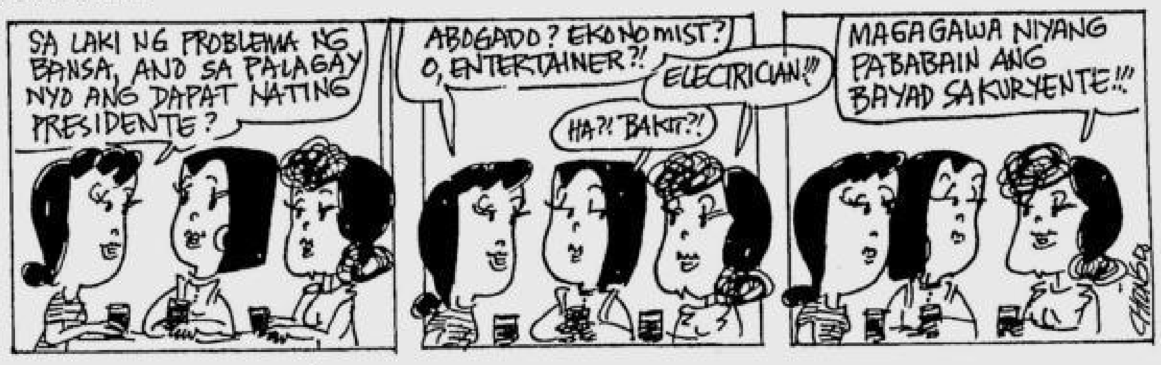
PUGAD BABOY
BY P.M. JUNIOR


NABALITAAN MO BA 'YUNG NANGYARING BABY SWITCHING SA NURSERY NG OSPITAL?
PINA-DNA TEST PA 'YUNG MGA SANGGOL PARA MALAMAN KUNG SINU-SINO ANG MGA INA NILA.
NAGTATAKA NGA AKO KUNG BAKIT NAGING SENSATIONAL 'YANG BALITANG 'YAN.
DI BA SA LAHAT NG TELE-NOVELA E NANGYAYARI 'YANG MGA NAWAWALA'T NAGKA-KAPALIT NA SANGGOL?
KADALASAN PA NGA E NAIPAGPAPALIT 'YUNG SANGGOL NG MAYAMAN SA SANGGOL NG MAHIRAP!
AS IF NAGPUPUNTA 'YUNG MGA MAYAYAMAN SA OSPITAL NA PANG-MAHIRAP.
HINDI KAYA ANAK AKO NI RAMON REVILLA?

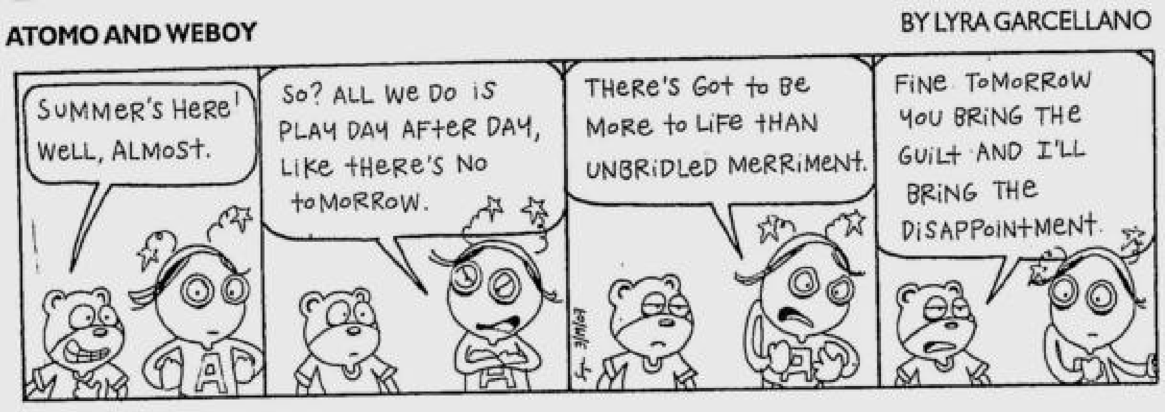
MUTTS
BY PATRICK McDONNELL


"THE COMEBACK KID."
muttscomics.com
3-19

LOVEKNOTS
BY ELIZABETH CHIONGLO

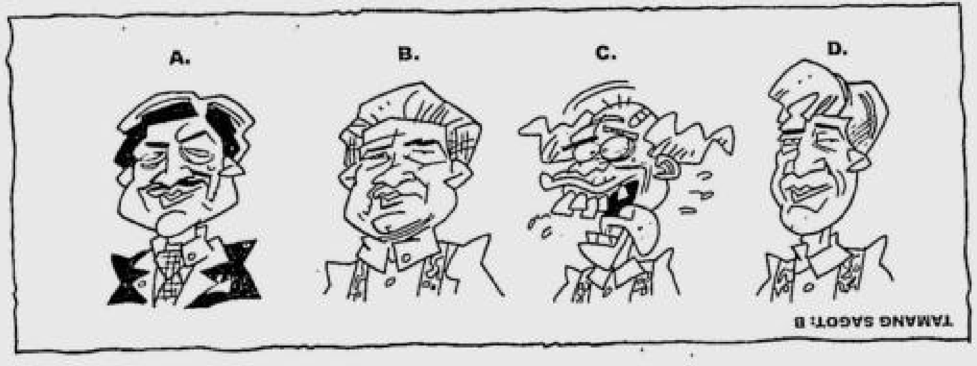

SA LAKI NG PROBLEMA NG BANSA, ANO SA PALAGAY NYO ANG DAPAT NATING PRESIDENTE?
ABOGADO? EKONOMIST? O, ENTERTAINER?!
ELECTRICIAN!!
HA?! BAKIT?!
MAGAGAWA NIYANG PABABAIN ANG BAYAD SA KURYENTE!!!
CHIONGLO

ATOMO AND WEBOY
BY LYRA GARCELLANO

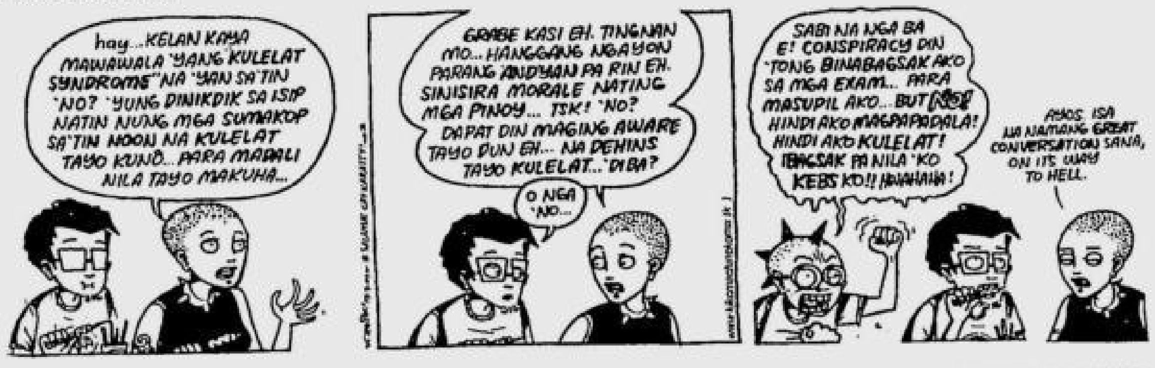

SUMMER'S HERE! WELL, ALMOST.
SO? ALL WE DO IS PLAY DAY AFTER DAY, LIKE THERE'S NO TOMORROW.
THERE'S GOT TO BE MORE TO LIFE THAN UNBRIDLED MERRIMENT.
FINE. TOMORROW YOU BRING THE GUILT AND I'LL BRING THE DISAPPOINTMENT.

DIVINE COMEDY
BY STEVEN PABALINAS

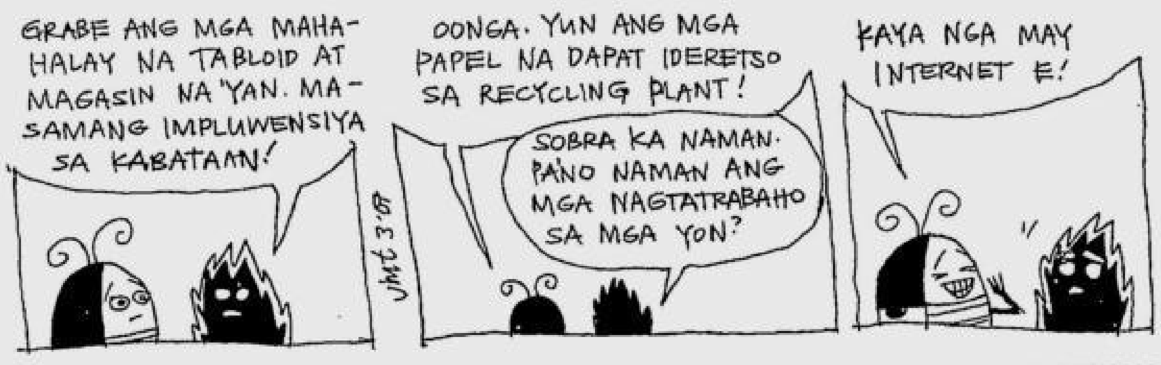
HULAAN KUNG SINO SA APAT ANG "NUISANCE CANDIDATE"


A.
B.
C.
D.
TAMANG SAGOT: B

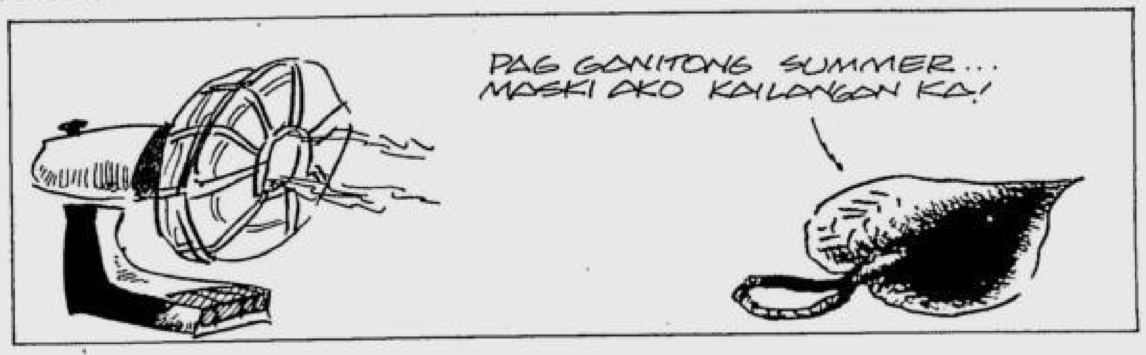
KIKO MACHINE
BY MANIX ABRERA


hay... KELAN KAYA MAWAWALA 'YANG "KULELAT SYNDROME" NA 'YAN SA'TIN 'NO? 'YUNG DINIKDIK SA ISIP NATIN NUNG MGA SUMAKOP SA'TIN NOON NA KULELAT TAYO KUNO... PARA MADALI NILA TAYO MAKUHA...
GRABE KASI EH. TINGNAN MO... HANGGANG NGAYON PARANG ANDYAN PA RIN EH. SINISIRA MORALE NATING MGA PINOY... TSK! 'NO? DAPAT DIN MAGING AWARE TAYO DUN EH... NA DEHINS TAYO KULELAT... 'DIBA?
O NGA 'NO...
SABI NA NGA BA E! CONSPIRACY DIN 'TONG BINABAGSAK AKO SA MGA EXAM... PARA MASUPIL AKO... BUT NO! HINDI AKO MAGPAPADALA! HINDI AKO KULELAT! IBAGSAK PA NILA 'KO KEBS KO!! HAHAHA!
AYOS. ISA NA NAMANG GREAT CONVERSATION SANA, ON ITS WAY TO HELL.

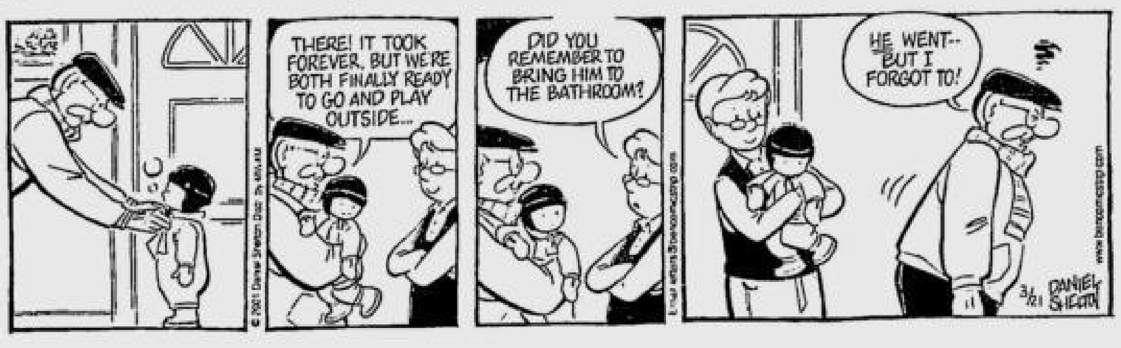
MIKROKOSMOS
BY JOMIKE TEJIDO


GRABE ANG MGA MAHAHALAY NA TABLOID AT MAGASIN NA 'YAN. MASAMANG IMPLUWENSIYA SA KABATAAN!
OONGA. YUN ANG MGA PAPEL NA DAPAT IDERETSO SA RECYCLING PLANT!
SOBRA KA NAMAN. PA'NO NAMAN ANG MGA NAGTATRABAHO SA MGA YON?
KAYA NGA MAY INTERNET E!

TULDOK
BY PAPU AND TATUM MILAMBILING


PAG GANITONG SUMMER... MASKI AKO KAILANGAN KA!

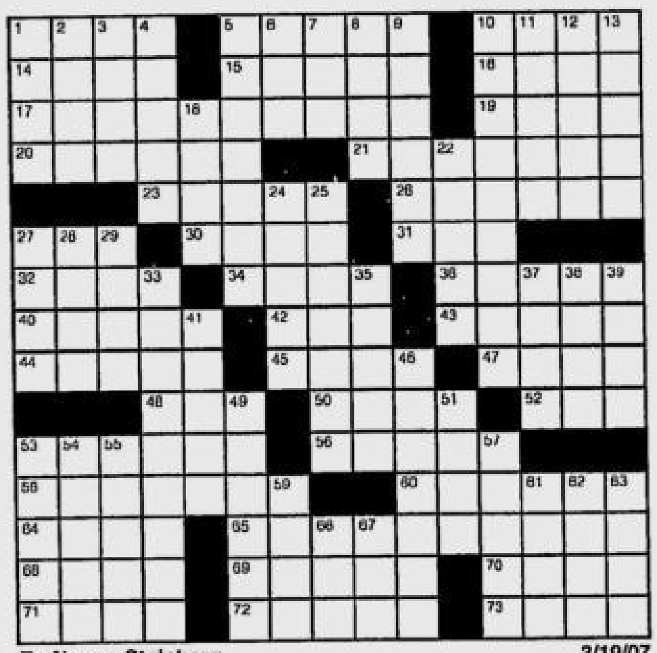
BEN
BY DANIEL SHELTON


THERE! IT TOOK FOREVER, BUT WE'RE BOTH FINALLY READY TO GO AND PLAY OUTSIDE...
DID YOU REMEMBER TO BRING HIM TO THE BATHROOM?
HE WENT-- BUT I FORGOT TO!
3/21 DANIEL SHELTON

DAILY CROSSWORD

ACROSS
1 Actress Rogers
5 Wall climbers
10 Spanish home
14 De-crease
15 Came to
16 Boat's body
17 End of discussion!
19 Polish prose
20 Main course
21 Abate
23 Lady Liberty's prop
26 Supply boat
27 1900
30 Father
31 Business letter abbr.
32 Captain in "Moby Dick"
34 OK Corral combatant
36 Lugged
40 Nigerian city
42 Curly's friend
43 Chalkboard
44 'Tween
45 Brad of "Troy"
47 Break bread
48 Use a Singer
50 Dweeb
52 Vegas lead-in
53 Flying object?
56 Iroquois tribe members
58 Sticking to the agenda
60 Pentax or Kodak
64 Black in Burgundy
65 Major phone connections
68 Vogue rival
69 Chart stand
70 Sardine containers
71 Visualizes
72 Stockholm resident
73 Biblical paradise

DOWN
1 Mickey and Minnie
2 Shah's realm
3 More than half
4 Stagnant
5 Actress Bertinelli
6 "Sands of __ Jima"
7 Unpromising replies
8 Barely manages
9 Act alluring
10 Congested condition
11 Financial review
12 Playground incline
13 Change
18 Business VIPs
22 Sacrifice plays
24 Charley horse
25 Female lead
27 Brewer's ingredient
28 Tobacco mouthful
29 First Christmas visitors
33 Game figures
35 Falk or Fonda
37 Rear appendage
38 Sicilian volcano
39 Ruby and Sandra
41 Nearly vertical
46 Thin stream
49 Gets off a letter
51 Start a new hand
53 Loudness units
54 Tropical lizard
55 Functional
57 Hit, Biblically
59 Crop of a bird
61 Author Bagnold
62 M. Descartes
63 Grp.
66 Function
67 Actor Beatty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By Norma Steinberg
San Francisco, CA

3/19/07

Saturday's Puzzle Solved

G	R	E	E	N	B	E	R	G	■	A	W	I	N	G
M	U	L	L	I	O	N	E	D	■	S	E	N	O	R
A	L	L	I	G	A	T	O	R	■	S	A	U	T	E
N	E	S	T	E	R	S	■	■	M	I	N	N	I	E
■	■	■	E	L	D	■	A	D	E	S	■	D	O	N
G	A	T	■	S	E	R	P	E	N	T	■	A	N	S
R	U	E	D	■	R	I	P	S	■	S	A	T	A	N
E	C	C	E	■	S	N	A	P	S	■	L	I	L	A
E	T	H	I	C	■	S	L	O	E	■	F	O	L	K
N	I	N	■	H	E	E	L	T	A	P	■	N	Y	E
B	O	O	■	R	U	S	S	■	E	A	R	■	■	■
A	N	C	H	O	R	■	■	T	A	P	E	R	E	D
C	E	R	A	M	■	F	R	U	G	A	L	I	T	Y
K	E	A	N	E	■	O	U	B	L	I	E	T	T	E
S	R	T	A	S	■	G	R	E	E	N	T	E	A	S

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3/19/07

HOROSCOPE

YOU BORN TODAY: Once you have set your cap for something, you are relentless in pursuing it. You're a contradiction because you are both an imaginative dreamer and an intense achiever. You generally get what you want. You are hardworking and diligent. Few can keep up with your tireless pace. Work hard to build or construct something this year. Your rewards will soon follow.

Birthdate of: Bruce Willis, actor; Glenn Close, actress; Wyatt Earp, US marshal.

ARIES (March 21 to April 19): You have to address something that was done poorly before, and now you have to do it again. This is a classic day for cleanups and repairs.

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20): A friend or a group might oppose you today. You might find that you are at cross purposes with others. Perhaps you'll have to agree to disagree.

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20): Powerful pressures from authority figures (this includes bosses and parents) are likely today. This is not a good time for a Mexican standoff. People want you to account for yourself. (Oops.)

CANCER (June 21 to July 22): Avoid political and religious arguments today. You can't win. Besides, there are none so deaf as those who are wearing headphones (if you get my drift).

LEO (July 23 to Aug. 22): Disputes about shared possessions are likely today. Try to avoid these. This is not a good day to engage in power struggles with others. You will only encourage more opposition.

VIRGO (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22): The way you relate to others is being tested today. You might have to make radical changes in areas that are no longer working out.

LIBRA (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22): You might have to contend with the breakdown of machinery and the need for repairs at work. You might even feel this influence with respect to your health.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23 to Nov. 21): Parents must be patient with children today. Don't throw your weight around. Children follow your example, not what you say. If you want them to be reasonable, demonstrate this.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21): Power struggles with family members—especially parents—are highly likely today. Instead, focus on repairs that need to be done at home. (Do family relationships need repairing?)

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 to Jan. 19): If you can, let go of habitual ways of talking, thinking and doing things. Try to be open to new lines of thought and expression.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 to Feb. 18): Something connected with financial matters—how you want to earn money, or even how you want to spend money—seems to obsess you today. Lighten up.

PISCES (Feb. 19 to March 20): You might feel this is the time to purge something from your life. It could be a bad habit, or it could be a person who is not beneficial to you anymore.

CONCEPTIS SU DOKU

Conceptis Sudoku by Dave Green

	3						6	
5		4				2		7
			9	8	2			
	8		2		7		1	
	2	7		9		6	3	
	1		6		3		7	
			1	6	5			
8		1				3		4
	5						2	

Difficulty Level ★

3/19

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HOW TO PLAY SU DOKU

Fill the grid so that every column, every row and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9.
Tips and program at www.sudoku.com

Answer to previous puzzle

6	2	3	5	4	1	7	9	8
7	4	5	9	8	3	1	6	2
1	8	9	7	2	6	3	4	5
2	6	7	8	3	5	9	1	4
8	5	1	6	9	4	2	7	3
3	9	4	2	1	7	8	5	6
9	1	8	4	5	2	6	3	7
4	3	6	1	7	8	5	2	9
5	7	2	3	6	9	4	8	1

Difficulty Level ★★★★★

MYLENE DIZON

Skin art

IS THAT A FISH TATTOO ON MYLENE DIzon's lower ab? Yes, and those are angels on Katya Santos' back.

KC Montero's got wings on his back. As for FrancisM and Kamikazee's Jay Contreras, what could have possessed them to have a whole community of colorful symbols etched on their bods?

RUSHES

This will be answered in a forthcoming book, "Tattoo Manila," featuring the skin art so proudly shown off by some of the country's most prominent personalities in the fields of entertainment, modeling and sports.

The book, published by Chris Cahilig Publishing, will be available at all leading bookstores in May.

Self-destructive

DAVID DUCHOVNY

NEW YORK—David Duchovny of "X-Files" returns to television in a new Showtime (CBS Corp.) comedy about a self-destructive writer.

The 46-year-old actor plays a novelist whose "obsession with truth-telling and self-destructive behavior are both destroying and enriching his career," the cable network announced.

The series, which doesn't have a title yet, premieres in August. *AP*

Scared of mom?

HO CHI MINH CITY—Hollywood star Angelina Jolie hugged and spoke a few words in Vietnamese to comfort the crying boy she has adopted and plans to take to live with her family in America, newspapers reported on Friday.

Reports said the child, almost three-and-a-half years old and now renamed Pax Thien Jolie, cried when he saw his adoptive mother on Thursday at the Ho Chi Minh City orphanage where he has lived since infancy.

Jolie told him in Vietnamese, "*Khong sao dau, khong sao dau* (No problem, no problem)." *Reuters*

JOLIE with older son Maddox

Declared dead

SAN FRANCISCO—Wikipedia called actor-comedian Sinbad on Friday to apologize after a prankster declared the performer dead in the communally crafted online encyclopedia.

Sinbad received a flood of concerned messages from friends and relatives after someone edited Wikipedia data about him to falsely read that he had died of a heart attack.

Wikipedia spokeswoman Sandra Ordonez told AFP, "Why they targeted Sinbad, I couldn't begin to guess." *AFP*

King post-surgery

LOS ANGELES—Larry King underwent vascular surgery and was expected to return Monday to his CNN talk show.

King, 73, was admitted to Cedars Sinai Medical Center where doctors performed an operation to remove plaque from the carotid artery and restore blood flow. *AP*

08:00 AM / MANILA, PHILIPPINES
03:00 AM / RIYADH, SAUDI ARABIA
"Alam naming tulog ka pa sa Saudi , pero pagkagising mo, kami ang unang babati ng... Happy Birthday to you, Happy Birthday to you..."

INTERNATIONAL VOICE TEXT

Ngayon, sa sulit na halaga, mas mapapadama mo ang iyong pagmamahal sa Saudi Arabia at Kuwait, anytime!

With SMART Pinoy International Voice Text, pwede ka nang mag-send ng message na punung-puno ng pagmamahal. What's more,

P15 lang per International Voice Text sent—same price as an International Text.*

Sulit na ang presyo, maririnig pa niya ang boses mo. Kaya mag-voice text ka na!

NAPAKADALI MAG-INTERNATIONAL VOICE TEXT
1. To Send:
*8900• country code • area code • phone number
Example: Dial *8900966509244444
2. To Retrieve: Call the retrieval code reflected in the SMS alert or dial
*9900• country code • area code • phone number
Example: Dial *9900966509244444
3. To Reply: Press '1' upon message retrieval then follow the voice prompt.

NAPAKA-AFFORDABLE
1. To Send: P15 per Voice Text
2. To Retrieve:
P2.50 for first retrieval
P1 for succeeding retrievals
3. To Reply: same rate as sending

AVAILABLE TO:
And other Postpaid Subscribers.

Handog sa inyo ng
SMART PINOY
OFW SERVICES
Pamilya'y pinagtitibay, sa pagganda ng buhay.

*P15 per International Text is regular rate for prepaid subscribers.

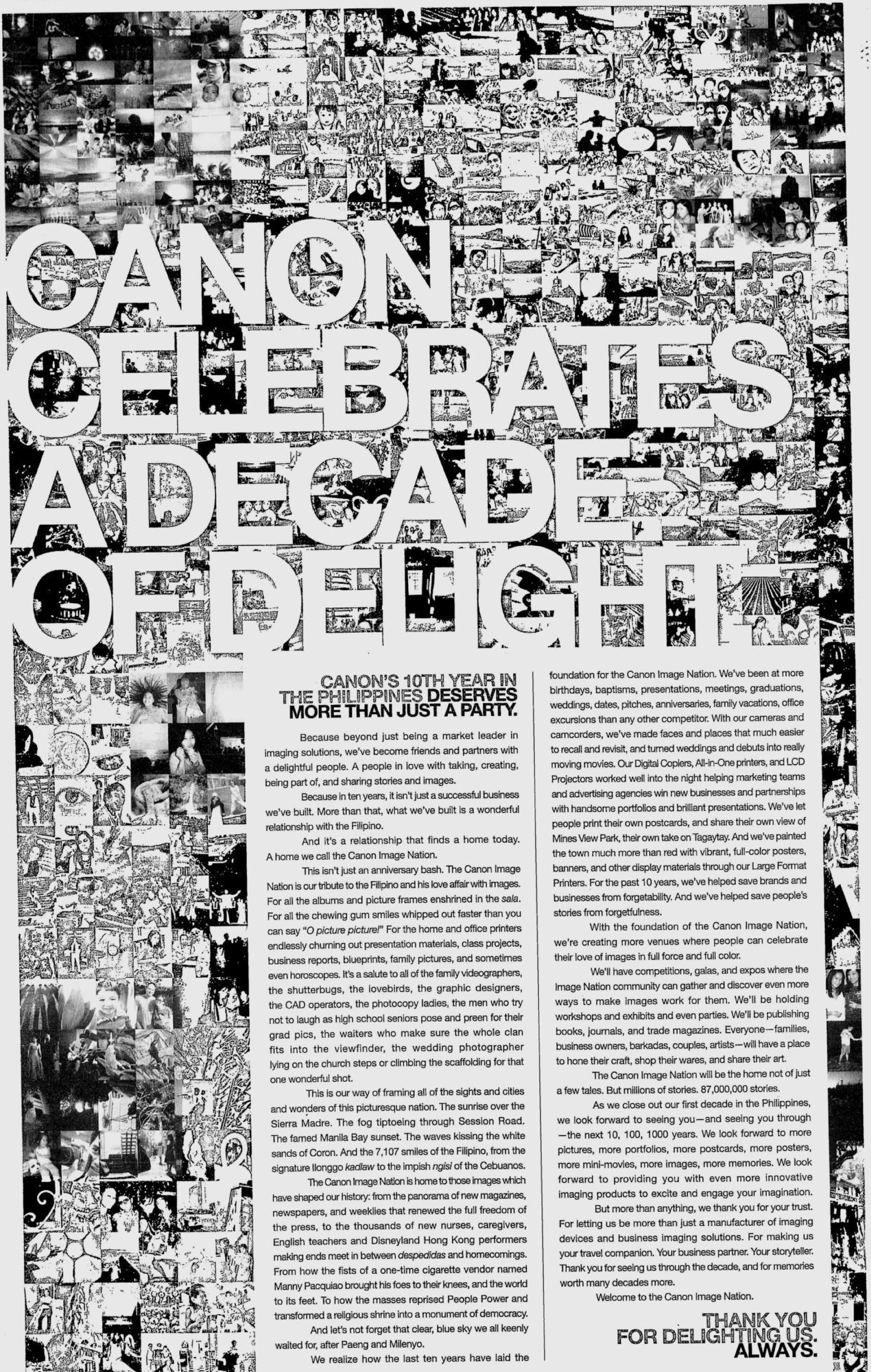
Service is only for sending to International Numbers abroad. Not valid for SMART roaming SIMs.

YOU insist. WE can't resist.
a WOLL FREDO film
COMPOUND
It's BACK!
at
Robinsons
Movieworld
GALLERIA
indieSine
MARCH
14 to 20
MTRCB R-18 Strictly for Adults
MOVIEWORLD

SOLAR ALL ACCESS
SAME PLACE
DIFFERENT SCENARIO
BLAZE of GLORY
PACMAN Rides Again!
The WBC International Super Featherweight Championship
MANNY PACQUIAO vs JORGE SOLIS
43 - 3 - 2, 34 KOs
32 - 0 - 2, 23 KOs
Watch LIVE via SATELLITE
ROBINSONS MOVIEWORLD
galleria • ermita • metro east • imus • dasmariñas • lipa
starmills, pampanga • angeles • bacolod
APRIL 15, 2007 • SUNDAY • 8 AM
Ticket Price: P500 [illegible]
[illegible] for more details
Tickets are available starting March 20 until April 15 at the ticket booth

10
Delightful Years
IN THE PHILIPPINES

Canon
Delighting You Always



CANON CELEBRATES A DECADE OF DELIGHT

CANON'S 10TH YEAR IN THE PHILIPPINES DESERVES MORE THAN JUST A PARTY.

Because beyond just being a market leader in imaging solutions, we've become friends and partners with a delightful people. A people in love with taking, creating, being part of, and sharing stories and images.

Because in ten years, it isn't just a successful business we've built. More than that, what we've built is a wonderful relationship with the Filipino.

And it's a relationship that finds a home today. A home we call the Canon Image Nation.

This isn't just an anniversary bash. The Canon Image Nation is our tribute to the Filipino and his love affair with images. For all the albums and picture frames enshrined in the *sala*. For all the chewing gum smiles whipped out faster than you can say "*O picture picture!*" For the home and office printers endlessly churning out presentation materials, class projects, business reports, blueprints, family pictures, and sometimes even horoscopes. It's a salute to all of the family videographers, the shutterbugs, the lovebirds, the graphic designers, the CAD operators, the photocopy ladies, the men who try not to laugh as high school seniors pose and preen for their grad pics, the waiters who make sure the whole clan fits into the viewfinder, the wedding photographer lying on the church steps or climbing the scaffolding for that one wonderful shot.

This is our way of framing all of the sights and cities and wonders of this picturesque nation. The sunrise over the Sierra Madre. The fog tiptoeing through Session Road. The famed Manila Bay sunset. The waves kissing the white sands of Coron. And the 7,107 smiles of the Filipino, from the signature Ilonggo *kadlaw* to the impish *ngisi* of the Cebuanos.

The Canon Image Nation is home to those images which have shaped our history: from the panorama of new magazines, newspapers, and weeklies that renewed the full freedom of the press, to the thousands of new nurses, caregivers, English teachers and Disneyland Hong Kong performers making ends meet in between *despedidas* and homecomings. From how the fists of a one-time cigarette vendor named Manny Pacquiao brought his foes to their knees, and the world to its feet. To how the masses reprised People Power and transformed a religious shrine into a monument of democracy.

And let's not forget that clear, blue sky we all keenly waited for, after Paeng and Milenyo.

We realize how the last ten years have laid the foundation for the Canon Image Nation. We've been at more birthdays, baptisms, presentations, meetings, graduations, weddings, dates, pitches, anniversaries, family vacations, office excursions than any other competitor. With our cameras and camcorders, we've made faces and places that much easier to recall and revisit, and turned weddings and debuts into really moving movies. Our Digital Copiers, All-in-One printers, and LCD Projectors worked well into the night helping marketing teams and advertising agencies win new businesses and partnerships with handsome portfolios and brilliant presentations. We've let people print their own postcards, and share their own view of Mines View Park, their own take on Tagaytay. And we've painted the town much more than red with vibrant, full-color posters, banners, and other display materials through our Large Format Printers. For the past 10 years, we've helped save brands and businesses from forgetability. And we've helped save people's stories from forgetfulness.

With the foundation of the Canon Image Nation, we're creating more venues where people can celebrate their love of images in full force and full color.

We'll have competitions, galas, and expos where the Image Nation community can gather and discover even more ways to make images work for them. We'll be holding workshops and exhibits and even parties. We'll be publishing books, journals, and trade magazines. Everyone—families, business owners, barkadas, couples, artists—will have a place to hone their craft, shop their wares, and share their art.

The Canon Image Nation will be the home not of just a few tales. But millions of stories. 87,000,000 stories.

As we close out our first decade in the Philippines, we look forward to seeing you—and seeing you through—the next 10, 100, 1000 years. We look forward to more pictures, more portfolios, more postcards, more posters, more mini-movies, more images, more memories. We look forward to providing you with even more innovative imaging products to excite and engage your imagination.

But more than anything, we thank you for your trust. For letting us be more than just a manufacturer of imaging devices and business imaging solutions. For making us your travel companion. Your business partner. Your storyteller. Thank you for seeing us through the decade, and for memories worth many decades more.

Welcome to the Canon Image Nation.

THANK YOU FOR DELIGHTING US. ALWAYS.

10
Delightful Years
IN THE PHILIPPINES

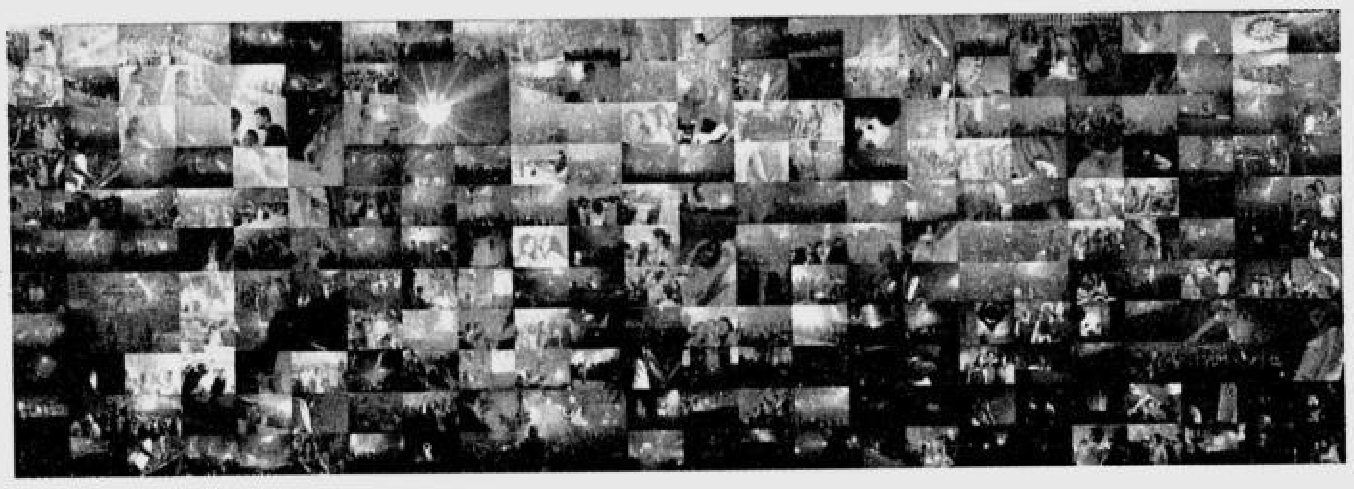
TO CLOSE OUT OUR FIRST DECADE IN THE PHILIPPINES, WE'RE HAVING MORE THAN JUST A PARTY. WE'RE PAYING TRIBUTE TO THE FILIPINO AND HIS LOVE AFFAIR WITH IMAGES. WE'RE BUILDING A HOME FOR WHAT'S BEEN A PICTURE-PERFECT PARTNERSHIP. WE'RE CHRISTENING A NATION. WELCOME TO A HOME OF MORE THAN 87,000,000 STORIES. WELCOME TO A LAND OF MORE THAN 7,107 SMILES. WELCOME TO THE PHILIPPINES IN FULL COLOR. **WELCOME TO THE...**

Canon Ima

Canon Image Nation

PERFECT10

APPRECIATION NIGHT FOR DEALERS AND BUSINESS PARTNERS



A decade of delight deserves more than just a birthday bash. That's why we're holding parties, galas, and other get-togethers all year round. And one of the biggest will be the PERFECT 10 appreciation night for dealers and business partners this coming May. It will be an evening of wining and dining. Of live music and entertainment. And of thanks, thanks, and more thanks. All for what's simply been a perfect partnership.

Canon Image Nation

DELIGHTFUL DESTINATIONS RAFFLE

Along with the feelings of gratitude and delight, we've also been touched by the spirit of giving. With the Image Nation DELIGHTFUL DESTINATIONS raffle, we're giving away brand new Canon cameras, video camcorders, single-function, multi-function, compact photo and large format printers every month from June to December. And for the grand draw, we're raffling off 10 trips to 10 of the most photographed Asian destinations.

Canon Image Nation

SUMMER

Summer signals the beginning of beach trips, bikini bodies and a hoard of vacation images. Come celebrate the Canon Image Nation Summer! Get your sunglasses and smiles ready for special promotions to better equip you on your next adventure. Mall roadshows for those seeking refuge in the cool indoors. And the Summer Party Fever events for more sun-loving excitement. You can get free memory cards, waterproof neck wallets, scrapbooking kits, Pizza Hut solo pan pizzas, or tickets to Phuket, Thailand. Get ready to shoot and show off the sun, sand, and surf with Canon digital imaging products.

Canon Image Nation

BUSINESS SOLUTIONS PROMOS

In celebration of our 10th anniversary, we're giving a 10% discount on iR3530 Digital copiers, with no downpayment and at a 0% interest installment plan for 10 months. For every unit purchased, customers have the option to rent another Digital Copier—iR5000 with finisher—at no additional investment cost.

Not to mention free imageWARE Document Manager Software when you go from paper to digital with the Canon Archiving System (iR2230 Digital Copier and DR1210C High Speed Scanner). This package is also offered at a 10% discount, 0% interest installment plan for 10 months, with no downpayment required.

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Now if all you simply want is a service center that's closer to home, we're giving you that too. We're opening fully-operational service centers in Mandaluyong, Cebu and Davao, as well as quick repair centers and drop-off points across Metro Manila. And even at our service centers, we'll be holding pick-a-prize raffle countdowns where you can win even more Canon products.

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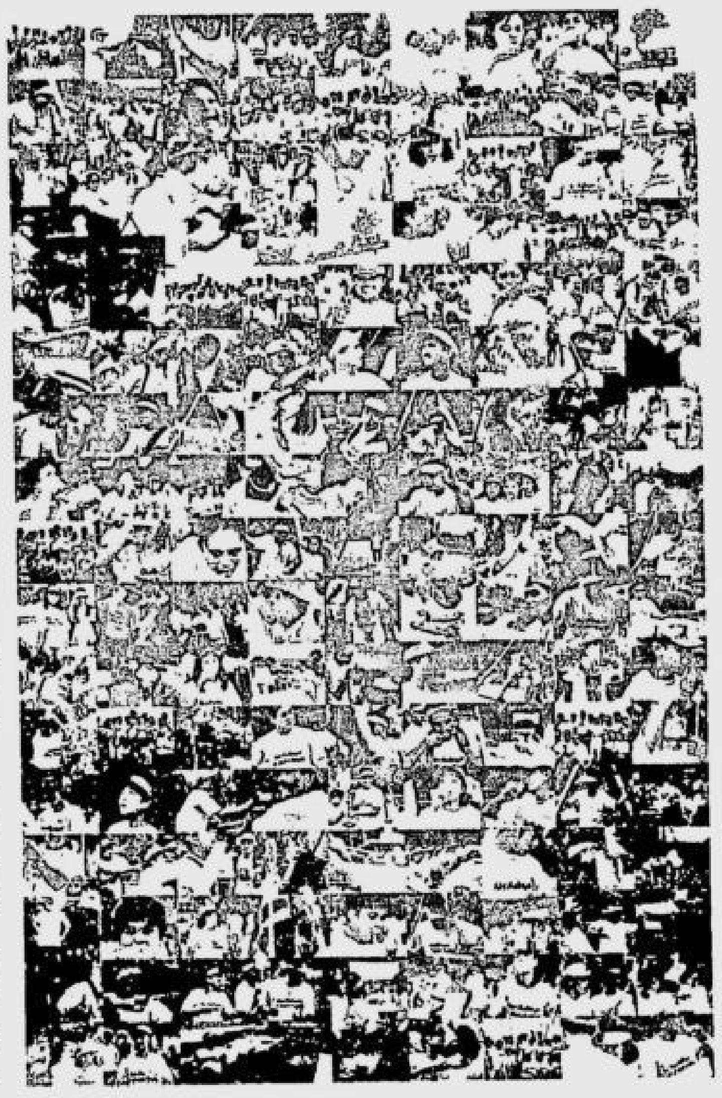

Canon Image Nation
SHOOT-OUT
CANON DIGITAL PHOTO MARATHON

Anyone who loves taking pictures—that is, everyone—is invited to the Canon Image Nation Shoot-Out. We're hitting the road and touring the many sights and wonders of the country, and shooting away at every stop. All you need is a camera of any brand, and you're good to go trigger-happy.

Canon Image Nation
SMILE 7107

With the birth of a new nation, we want to see the Philippines through fresh eyes. We want to see a new picture—to see new pictures—of the country. And we're holding the SMILE 7107 photo contest to do just that. We're calling on all EOS users to send us their freshest takes on the Philippines, and show all of the reasons Filipinos are an irrepressibly joyful people, in a new light. The finest images will be showcased in a handsome, full-color coffee-table book, and show everyone just why the Filipino never stops smiling.

Canon Image Nation
IMAGE EXPO 2007

Learn more about images, imaging devices, and how they can unleash your imagination at the two-day IMAGE EXPO 2007. There'll be mini-exhibits and demonstrations, a massive trade fair, and then the event highlight: a historical showcase of vintage Canon products through the years. Day one will be for business partners and members of the press, while the second day will be devoted to the public. Whether you're a dealer, enthusiast, or a student, there's no better place to hone your craft, strike a deal, sample Canon products, and meet the rest of the Image Nation community.

Canon Image Nation
ACADEMY

Turn vision into reality with the Canon Image Nation Academy. We'll be providing you with all the proper tools and training you need to become more creative, efficient, and productive. Watch out for the best digital imaging products, special promotions, and event activities that will feed your imagination and fuel your success.

10
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IN THE PHILIPPINES

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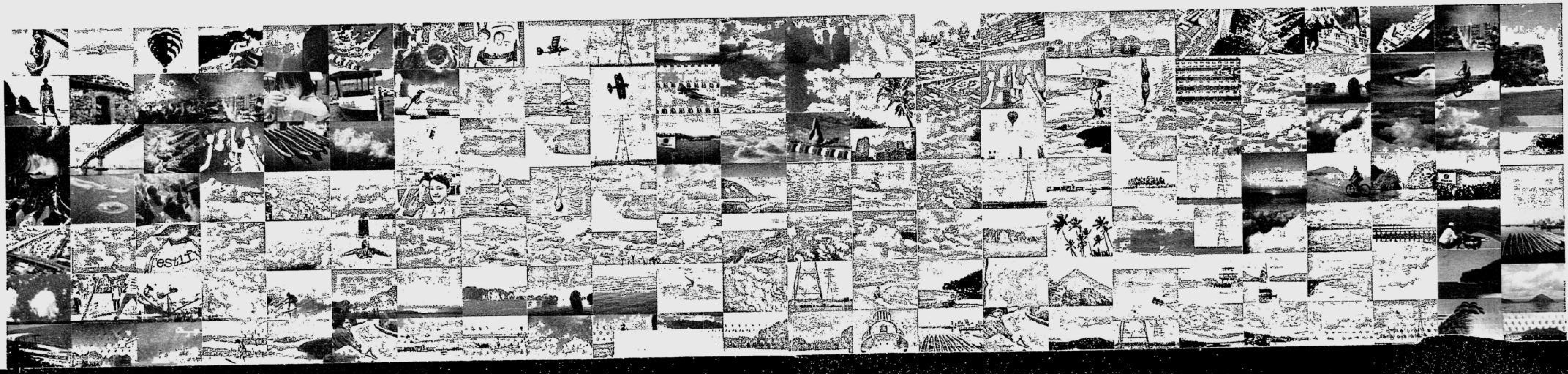

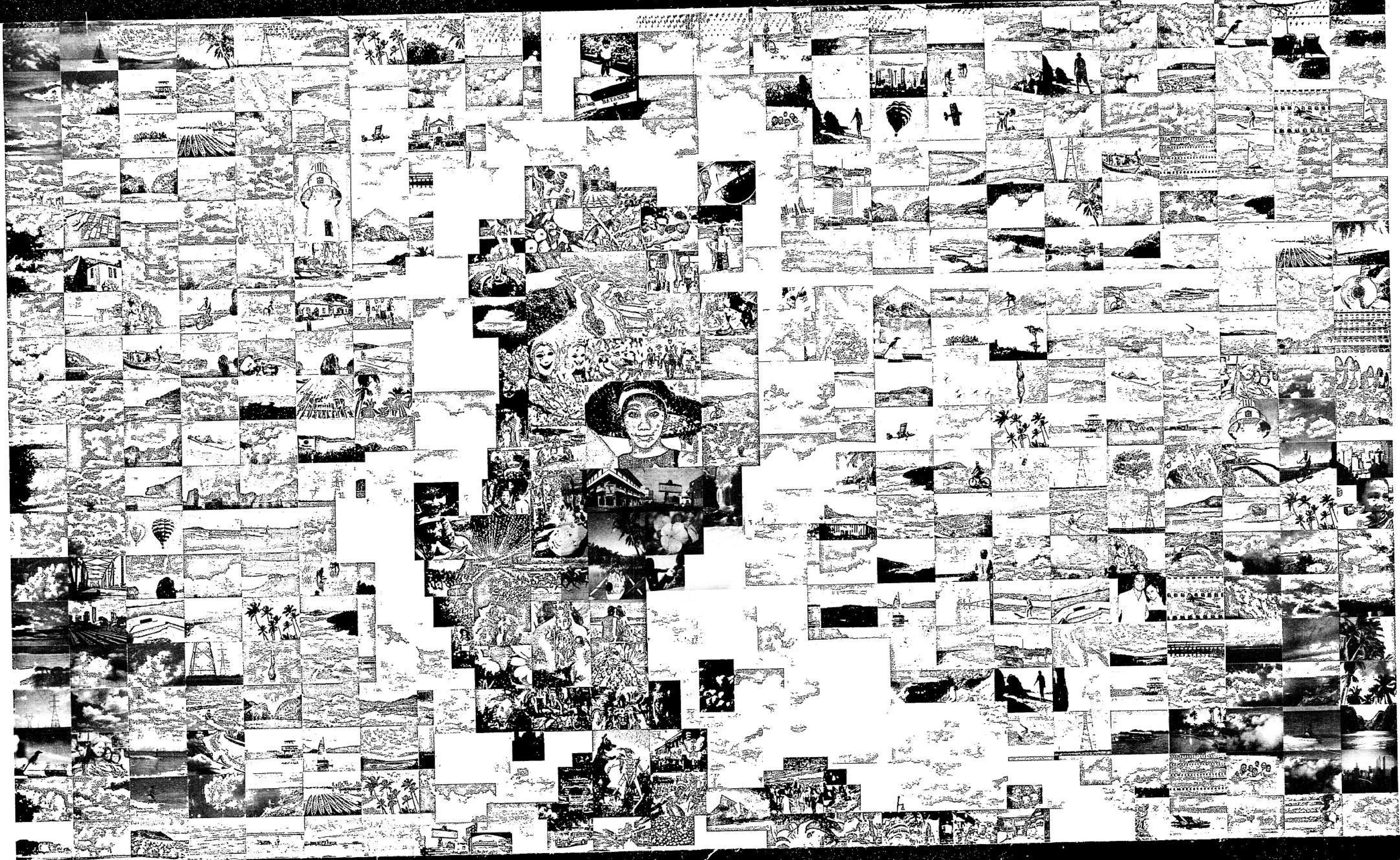
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IN THE PHILIPPINES

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MegaLink soars with new services

On its 17th year as the first operational shared ATM network, MegaLink revolutionizes the banking industry with a host of new features and the expansion of service offerings. Today it marks a number of milestones such as signing up MediLink Network, Inc.; welcoming a full equity member bank, and announcing another round of pioneering moves in electronic banking.

'Our primary strategic directions are to expand the network with the widest reach in touchpoints and widest customer base of end-users'

Tonight's celebration will have no less than Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) Gov. Amando M. Tetangco, Jr. as guest of honor, with some 200 guests from the banking and technology industry are expected to attend.

Member banks with outstanding network performances will be recognized tonight. Philippine National Bank (PNB) recorded the highest reply rate of 99.97%, which means that only three out of every 10,000 of its cardholder transactions were not responded to in time.

PNB also had the highest controllable approval rate of 99.26%, which means the cardholders had the lowest number of rejections on other banks' ATMs for reasons within the bank's control.

Bank of Commerce (BOC) posted the highest availability rate of 99.82%. Its ATM host computer averaged a downtime of only 2.6 minutes per day.

Development Bank of the Philippines (DBP) has the Bestselling Off-site ATM in Iligan City, while Robinsons Savings Bank has the Bestselling On-site ATM in Robinsons Place Manila.

"Our primary strategic directions are to expand the reach of the network with the widest reach in touchpoints for electronic transactions, and widest customer base of end-users; and a wide range of relevant products and services," said Jose L. Querubin, MegaLink Chairman and United Coconut Planters Bank (UCPB) President and CEO.

The network will reach healthcare customers nationwide through MediLink Network, Inc, which offers the country's first computerized claims clearing house network system for hospitals, HMOs, health insurers, self-insured corporations, clinics, and independent physicians associations. Under the agreement, MediLink will be launching EFT/POS payment terminals in cooperation with MegaLink.

"We also have new wireless POS terminals that will be rolled out for added payment convenience. These wireless, portable POS terminals for debit bills payment are secure and a convenient means of transaction in restaurants and other establishments," said Reynaldo G. David, MegaLink President and DBP President and CEO.

With the merger of Banco de Oro (BDO) and Equitable-PCIBank, MegaLink cardholders can expect even more POS terminals and convenient transactions as BDO POS terminals will be added to the network.

"MegaLink has also opened up affiliate network membership to non-bank ATM service aggregators with 30 ATMs or more.

Banks and non-banks with smaller ATM networks will be allowed to connect either through equity members or our affiliated network members. Both of these membership types require sponsorship by a full equity member," David added.

MegaLink has signed up a total of 35 banks over the past 17 years. Twenty banks remain operational as a result of mergers and acquisitions.

Other than ATM transactions and debit bills payment, MegaLink offers many value-added services. Payments for bills and purchases can be conveniently made over EFT/POS terminals in a variety of commercial establishments.

For mobile banking, MegaLink partnered with SMART Communications to allow cardholders to check their account balance, make checkbook and statement requests, transfer funds across their accounts, pay their bills, and reload their Smart Buddy and Smart Money.

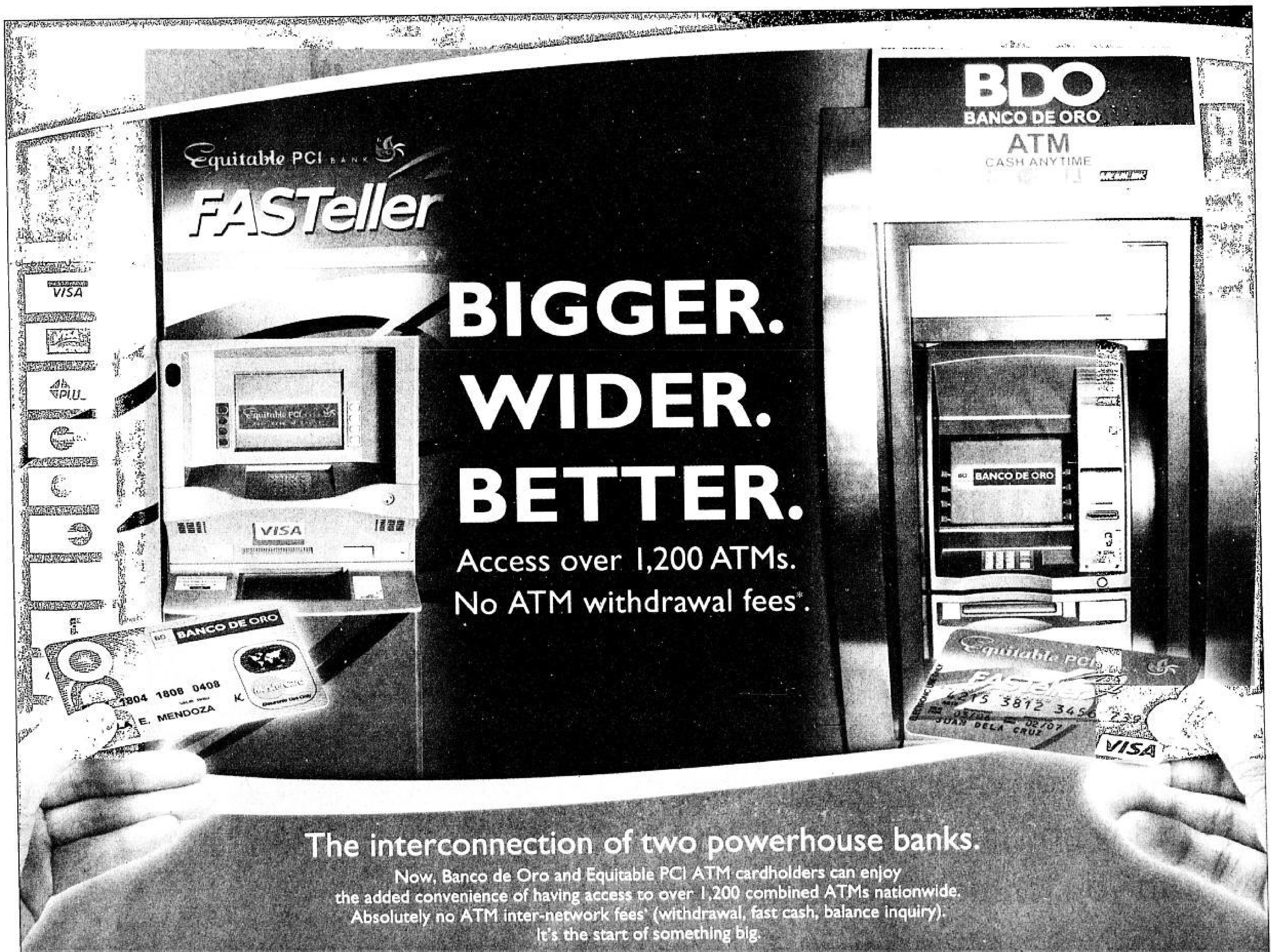
Internet payments are also accepted via the connected online merchants of Union

MEGALINK/ H2

PHOTOS FROM PRIME ASIA MAGAZINE

JOSE L. Querubin, MegaLink Chairman and United Coconut Planters Bank (UCPB) President and CEO.

REYNALDO G. David, MegaLink President and DBP President and CEO.



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MegaLink soars with new services

From page H1

Bank's The Port. Cardholders can also pay for their bills over the ATM, the telephone and mobile phone.

The network has implemented its interbank funds transfer (IBFT) facility over the ATM, and participating banks are increasing. With IBFT, funds may be transferred electronically between accounts across different banks.

MegaLink foresees all member banks joining in to benefit from the service by the end of 2007. IBFT is currently available with 11 member banks, and five more will soon be certified.

"Member banks may now offer IBFT services on all their service channels including over-the-counter. In time, we will be implementing IBFT over other MegaLink service delivery channels. Cardholders will be able to conduct IBFT over the Internet, their mobile phone, and their landline," said David.

Apart from individual clients' convenience, the MegaLink IBFT offers an alternative means for banks to effect inter-bank transfers online without the usual two-days clearing.

MegaLink is now the first ATM network to offer ATM switch outsourcing services. This pioneering service allows banks to achieve fully redundant and efficient ATM switch facilities more cost-effectively.

It allows even smaller banking institutions to offer more nationwide electronic banking transactions.

Just like its bigger counterparts, through a connection with the MegaLink ATM switch computer.

As more banks pool resources together through the shared facility, greater efficiencies and economies of scale are realized.

ATM switch outsourcing is a relatively new endeavor in the Philippines but is fairly common in more advanced economies, as ATMs have evolved from being a competitive advantage to a basic service requirement.

MegaLink pursued ATM switch outsourcing early on with a pilot implementation with International Exchange Bank in 2005, and with AIG Philam Savings Bank in 2006.

Today, armed with two years worth of experience in ATM switch outsourcing, MegaLink is ready to bring more cost-effective electronic banking services to more people than ever.

ATM switch outsourcing results in a number of benefits for both subscribing banks and individual customers.

For clients, switch outsourcing will increase the accessibility of their funds as ATMs abound.

Secondly, it increases the MegaLink network availability with more ATMs in off-site and provincial areas.

Banks, on the other hand, will experience lower costs as the huge capital outlay for establishing an ATM service can be avoided.

On the technical side, the move will also extend the life of a bank's switch system since its terminal support requirements will be driven directly to the MegaLink ATM switch for handling.

Setting up off-site ATMs will become more viable as a shared facility. Traditional banks have already saturated ATM deployment in their branches.

However, banks are not putting up more off-site ATMs because of prohibitive costs for remote servicing and site rental.

With shared off-site ATMs, the costs are spread across all banks that use it and the service can be delivered by MegaLink in partnership with banks, ATM deployers and off-site location establishments.

"Our present customer base consists of bank accountholders, but as banks continue to offer services that provide cards to non-account holders such as prepaid debit cards, we are able to extend the availability of the electronic banking channels to these non-accountholders as well," said Querubin.

MegaLink sees potential in reaching the "unbanked" market or people who are not traditional bank clients.

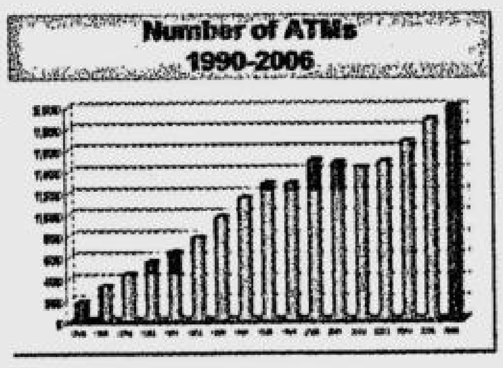
"Tapping the bigger population consisting of the dependents, students, irregular daily wage earners, etc. presents enormous growth in increasing the volume of cardholders and transactions," noted Querubin.

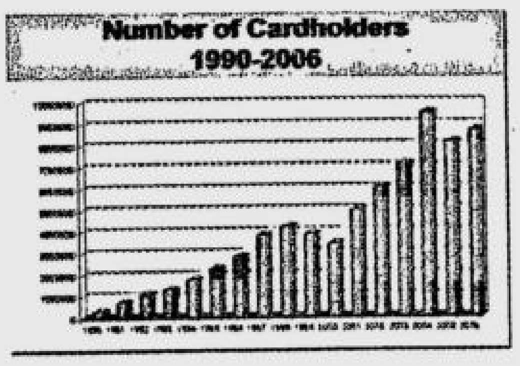
The network now processes an average of 400,000 switched transactions daily with a peak of over 767,500. This is a far cry from 200 ATM transactions a day in 1990.

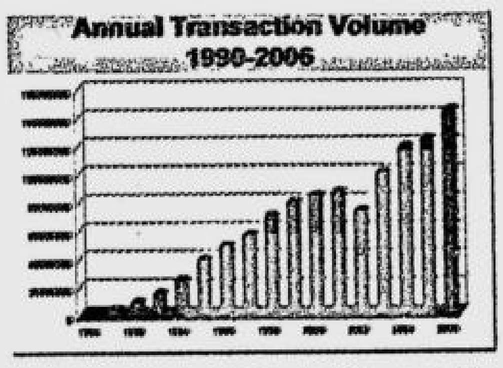
MegaLink now has over 2,000 ATMs, a base of 8.7 million cardholders, and reported 144 million switched transactions in 2006.

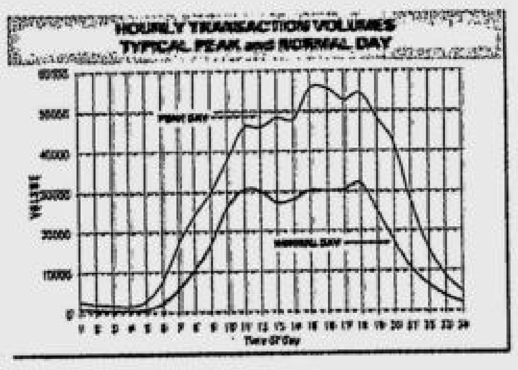
Aside from being the country's first shared operational ATM network, MegaLink lays claim to being the only network interconnected to the country's other two ATM networks

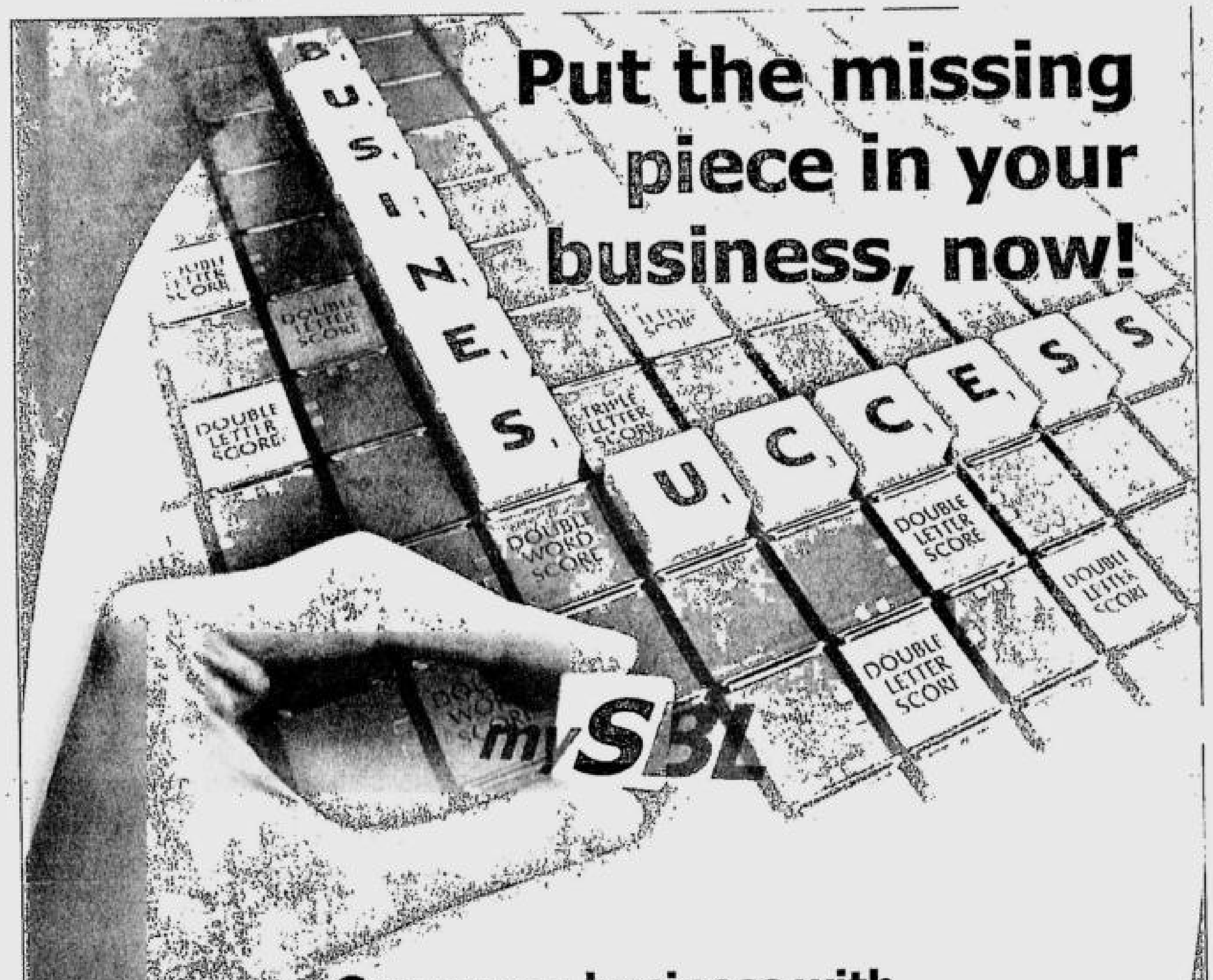
MEGALINK/ H4


Number of ATMs 1990-2006


Number of Cardholders 1990-2006


Annual Transaction Volume 1990-2006


HOURLY TRANSACTION VOLUMES TYPICAL PEAK and NORMAL DAY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Safety reminders for e-banking

MegaLink offers these reminders to keeping your electronic banking transactions safe. While security is addressed by several systems in the ATM network, the most obvious security measure is the client's Personal Identification Number (PIN). The PIN is never seen or logged in visually and ensures that the accountholder is verified with every electronic transaction.

Keeping the PIN secure is a good habit to develop for any ATM cardholder. Here are more tips to keep your financial transactions secure:

- TREAT your card like cash. Always keep your ATM card in a safe place.

- DO NOT disclose your card number, account number and PIN to anyone.

- USE a PIN that is not related to your personal information such as birthday, address or phone number. It may be easier for you to remember, but also easy for others to guess.

- MEMORIZE your PIN. Do not write the PIN on your ATM card or on any material that may be found with your card.

- BLOCK the view of others when using the ATM. Do not allow anyone to see the ATM screen while making your transaction and cover your fingers as you enter your PIN on the keypad.

- IN CASES of online banking, transact only on a secure PC or laptop.

- STORE your transaction slips in a safe place and compare them with your account statement each month.

- DO NOT let other people transact with your ATM card and PIN.

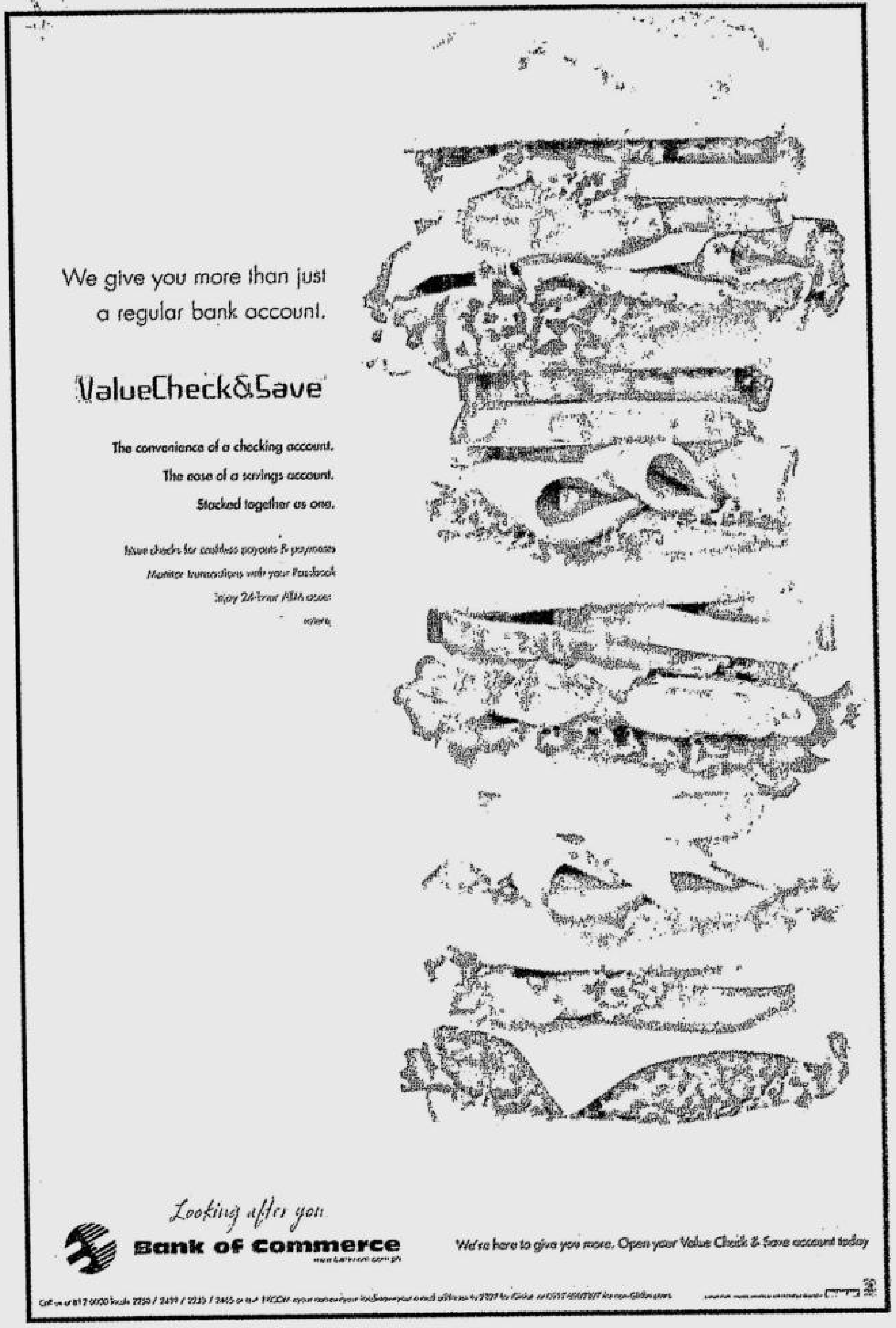
- AVOID getting assistance from strangers at the ATM. Ask for help only from authorized bank personnel or contact your bank hotline.

- CONTACT your bank immediately in cases of a lost or captured ATM card.

- BE watchful against phony bank websites that may look like the official website but tricks you into entering personal information. Know the exact URL of your intended website. Leave a suspicious website immediately.

- DO NOT give out your card number online unless the site is secure (look for a closed lock at the bottom of your browser).

- MEGALINK and member banks do not email, text or call customers to request for account information, card number or PIN. Beware of email, text and phone scams that request for personal information.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17th Anniversary Program Highlights

March 19, 2007, Hotel Intercontinental Manila

Guest of Honor

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Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas

Signing of MegaLink's New Connection
MediLink Network, Inc.

Signing of New Equity Member
One Network Bank

Signing of New Debit Bills Payment Institutions
Philippine National Construction
Corporation Skyway
Loyola Plans Consolidated
Cebu Pacific Air
CITI Financial

Announcement of Awards

Highest Reply Rate
Philippine National Bank

Highest Host Availability
Bank of Commerce

Highest Controllable Approval Rate
Philippine National Bank

Bestselling On-site ATM
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Bestselling Off-site ATM
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there's a new energy in Premiere Bank

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MegaLink soars with new services

From page H2

for the past 10 years.

Through the interconnection with BancNet and Expressnet, which had been initiated by MegaLink in both instances, MegaLink cardholders have extended access to over 7000 ATMs nationwide.

MegaLink is also the first non-bank institution and only ATM network connected to BSP's Philippine Payments and Settlements System (PhilPASS), which greatly benefits member banks in risk management and interbank settlement efficiency.

Its pioneering status continues with its acceptance as the founding country member of the ATM Industry Association (ATMIA), a global organization of 812 institutional members in over 60 countries.

ATMIA owns and operates the Global ATM Security Alliance, which provides members with the latest information, trends and assistance in network security.

'MegaLink's pioneering status continues with its acceptance as the founding country member of the ATM Industry Association (ATMIA), a global organization of 812 institutional members in over 60 countries'

"From being just an ATM network offering basic withdrawals, balance inquiries, and same-card transfers, we have expanded and evolved by offering bills payment, purchases, inter-bank funds transfers, and more, across multiple delivery channels such as POS terminals, over the telephone, mobile phone, and the Internet. MegaLink's business perspective is changing with the times. We're opening up more areas of involvement for our member banks," said Cris Santillan, MegaLink GM.

Customers and cardholders have become more discerning as they are presented with a wide variety of options to fulfill their communications and banking needs," said Querubin.

"We will continue to keep up with evolving trends in technology and changing customer demands, continually optimizing the potentials of the network."

MegaLink member banks include AIG PhilAm Savings Bank, Asiatrust Bank, Bank of Commerce, Development Bank of the Philippines, Equitable PCI Bank, Equitable Savings Bank, GSIS Family Bank, GE Money Bank, LBC Bank, Maybank, One Network Bank, Pacific Ace Savings Bank, , Philippine National Bank, Philippine Veterans Bank, Planters Development Bank, Premiere Development Bank, Queen City Development Bank, Robinsons Savings Bank, Union Bank of the Philippines and United Coconut Planters Bank.

Q&A with the Chairman and the President

Jose L. Querubin, MegaLink Chairman and President and CEO of United Coconut Planters Bank, and Reynaldo G. David, MegaLink President and President and CEO of the Development Bank of the Philippines, know from firsthand experience what the synergy of banks, finance institutions, technology leaders, retailers and other establishments can accomplish. Together, they are leading the network through a season of rapid change that will influence how people do business and access their money. Here they discuss how MegaLink's innovations are changing the industry.

What is the latest on the country's longest running ATM network?

Querubin: We are working at increasing touchpoints that target the widest reach of network and widest base of end-users for electronic transactions; as well as developing a wider range of relevant products and services. MegaLink will be focusing on providing the utmost convenience to customers and end-users in the electronic transfer of value.

David: MegaLink has been exploring new avenues that will allow us to better serve our member banks and their customers, not just with new services or technical enhancements. Our primary business stems from ATM debit cards and providing transactional services across multiple service delivery channels such as ATMs, point-of-sale, mobile phones, the Internet, the telephone, and other proprietary channels of our member banks. But we have identified new business plans for the next 3 to 5 years that are set to expand our reach and widen our range of products and services which are classified into two categories, one catering to consumers and end-users with transactional services across multi-delivery channels, and the other supporting our member banks with greater cost-efficiencies with centralized back-office and managed services.

How will this be accomplished?

David: For starters, we are ready to proceed with offering ATM expansion through outsourced ATM driving at MegaLink. We are already operational with two of our member banks for ATM switch outsourcing. We are now in the process of ironing out the requirements for outsourcing of purely ATM driving to boost the deployment of ATMs.

Through ATM switch outsourcing, we are addressing the issue of increasing ATM deployment in off-site areas and in rural locations where the cost of setting up ATMs could be substantial. Smaller banks and even commercial establishments and retailers who would like to put up ATMs can eventually be accommodated by the service more cost-effectively.

Will this mean having more member banks?

David: Yes, it will expand network membership to include new ATM deployers such as rural banks, ATM service aggregators and other financial institutions. It will mean having more connections, and more touchpoints where our cardholders and the general banking public can transact. In line with this, MegaLink has opened up affiliate network membership to non-bank ATM service aggregators with 30 ATMs or more. Banks and non-banks with smaller ATM networks will also be allowed to connect either through equity members or our affiliated network members. Both of these membership types require sponsorship by a full equity member.

What other services can cardholders expect?

Querubin: MegaLink cardholders have been able to pay for bills and purchases over PayLink terminals in a large number of establishments through Equitable Card Network. This year's anniversary marks our tie-up with MediLink, a payment clearing house for healthcare organizations. Cardholders will soon be able to pay for doctor's consultation fees, medical tests or hospital bills with their ATM cards on MegaLink POS terminals.

David: New wireless technology is broadening the acceptability of MegaLink ATM card payments via wireless POS terminals, such that cards can now be used to pay for traditional cash-on-delivery transactions. These wireless, portable POS terminals are secure and a convenient means of transaction in restaurants and other establishments.

Inter-bank funds transfer (IBFT) on the ATMs will soon be enabled throughout the network and its member banks' delivery channels, fueling more efficient transfers of value via online real-time credits to accounts. In time, we will be implementing IBFT over other MegaLink service delivery channels. This will have a positive effect on the economy and payments industry as traditional payment and remittance services of banks will be enhanced with online electronic inter-bank funds transfers via MegaLink. Business transactions may be supported with immediate completion of electronic payments, without need for physical checks, cut-off times, and clearing periods.

What are the new trends in the industry?

Querubin: Technology is converging to a point where we can offer more services through more service delivery channels. Wireless technology is bringing banking to your fingertips. Telcos may become involved in financial services as they capitalize on the robust capabilities that the convergence of computer and telecommunications technologies provide. Thus, banks and networks both compete and work hand in hand to continually improve the quality and levels of services that we provide. Faster, better, and cheaper is the way of the future.

How will all this affect the cardholder?

Querubin: Customers and cardholders have become more discerning as they are presented with a wider variety of options to fulfill their communications and banking needs.

David: With the combination of prepaid cards, and wireless terminals, cashless payments will become more pervasive in our society, servicing a greater majority of the public including students, dependents, daily wage workers, etc., unlike in traditional electronic banking and payments services where only those with bank accounts and credit cards can transact through cashless channels.

What's the biggest challenge for the industry today?

Querubin: Consolidation. While the three networks are already interconnected, the potential in inter-bank and inter-network transactions are still far from realized. We foresee great gains in cost savings, efficiency, and economies of scale that will likewise redound to benefits for the banking public if greater consolidation and collaboration in services are pursued across the existing networks. MegaLink has always been open to expanding the scope of interconnection with the two other networks. We have been very involved in past discussions in this regard.

With all these innovations, what will MegaLink be up to next?

David: MegaLink is a highly dynamic organization that has always worked with the active involvement of a Board of Directors composed of the CEOs and COOs of our member banks. This unique position allows us to provide the best in electronic banking services and value transfer while maintaining cost-efficient and reliable operations, and strategic links. As such, we will not just be moving with the times. As it always has, MegaLink will be making electronic banking history.

MEGALINK

THE PARTNERSHIP THAT WILL REVOLUTIONIZE PAYMENT PROCESSING IN THE HEALTHCARE INDUSTRY
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Megalink is the Philippines' dominant bank network facilitating electronic banking services through ATMs, Point-Of-Sale terminals and the internet. Medilink is the Philippines' only electronic claims network serving HMOs, Insurance Companies, Healthcare Providers, Pharmaceutical Companies and Drugstores. Our innovative solutions include Eligibility Verification and Fraud Prevention, Claims Adjudication and Payment Settlement.

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MegaLink milestones through the years

1990 - MegaLink becomes the first shared operational ATM network in the country with Equitable Bank, Far East Bank, PNB, and UCPB.

1991- Tripled in number of banks as 8 banks join MegaLink .

1992 - The founding banks of ATM Bersama, an Indonesian ATM consortium, turn to MegaLink's expertise as their model for a shared services network.

1993 - MegaLink launched Debit Bills Payment over the ATM, where cardholders pay for electric bills, cable TV fees and insurance premiums. Cardholders also welcome Paylink, where their accounts are directly debited after purchases are made at the point-of-sale.

MegaLink receives the prestigious Asian Institute of Management Award for Information Technology Management and becomes the only ATM network to gain the distinction.

1994 - PhoneLink is introduced as the world's first consortium-based phone banking facility.

1995 - MegaLink interconnects with BancNet for ATM transactions. International transactions are made possible with links to VISA/PLUS and Mastercard/Cirrus through Equitable Bank.

1996 - MegaLink hosts the 1st Philippine Electronic Banking Conference and Exhibition attended by over 300 participants from the industry.

1997 - MegaLink interconnects with Expressnet for ATM transactions. The 2nd Philippine Electronic Banking Conference features international guest speakers.

1998 - The Automated Reconciliation and Settlement System and MIS with Transaction Query system is activated for member banks.

The 3rd Philippine Electronic Banking Conference is held.

1999 - The 4th Philippine Electronic Banking Conference is held. MegaLink and its member banks benefit from Intranet and Helpdesk systems.

MegaLink gears for Y2K.

2000 - MegaLink and member banks successfully migrate through Y2K.

MegaLink holds the 5th Philippine Electronic Banking Conference.

2001 - The 6th Philippine Electronic Banking Conference is held.

2002 - The MegaLink Exposure Limit Management System (MELMS) , is launched to manage inter-bank settlement risks for ATM withdrawals and payments.

2003 - MegaLink launches Electronic Settlement with the Banko Sentral ng Pilipinas and becomes the first non-bank to participate in BSP's PhilPass. MegaLink establishes its Disaster Recovery Site.

2004 - Mobile Banking Service via SMART Communications, MegaLink Internet Payment Service via Union Bank's The PORT and Interbank Funds Transfer (IBFT) via ATMs are launched.

2005 - Debit Bills Payment via SMART mobile phones becomes available.

MegaLink is the first to implement full ATM Switch Outsourcing in the country with iBank as its pilot bank.

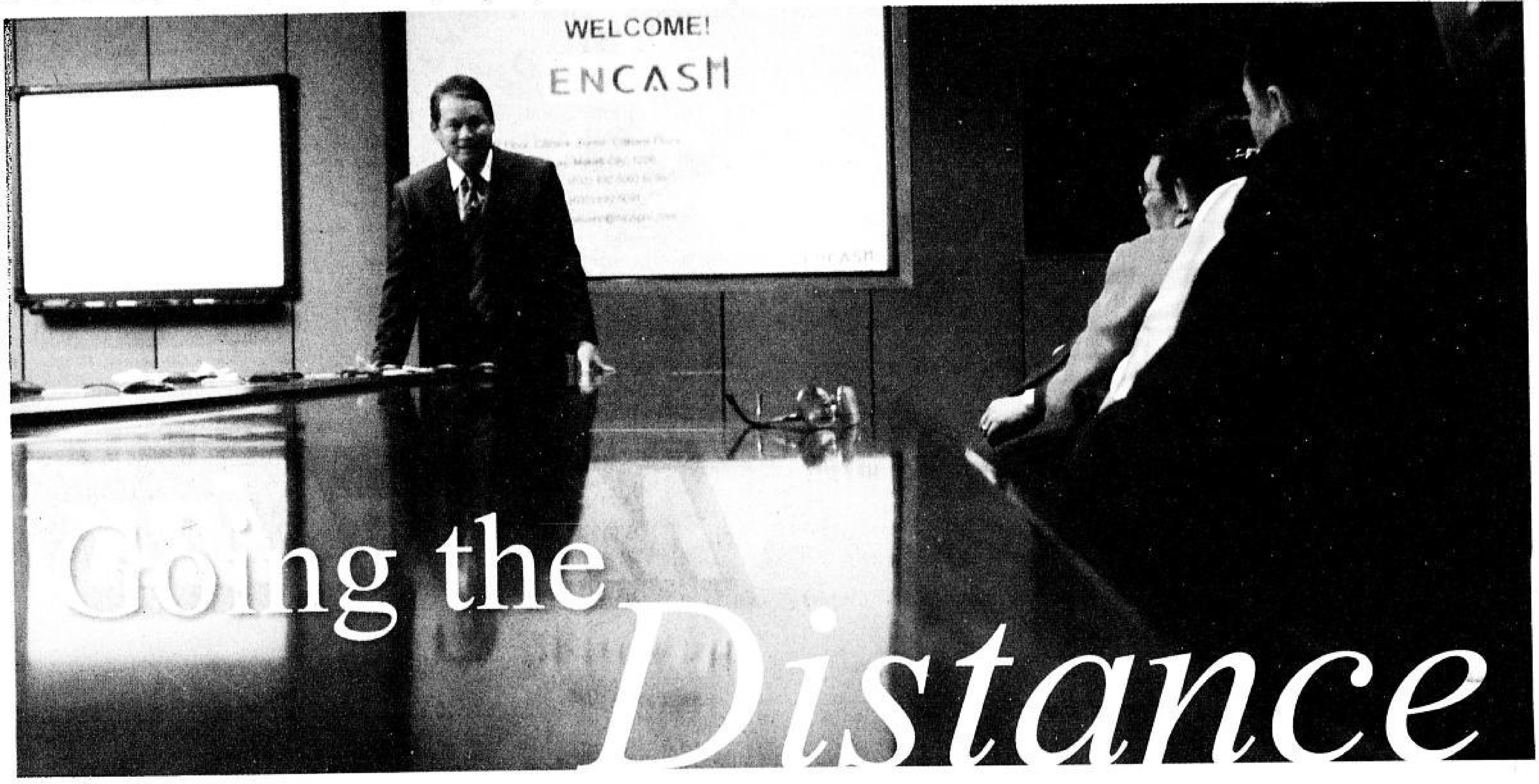
MegaLink successfully upgrades its switch software increasing its capacity almost five times. Redundant network configuration via frame relay is implemented across its member banks with shadow connections to the disaster recovery site.

2006 - ATM Switch Outsourcing is implemented with Philam Bank.

More banks participate in mobile banking, internet payments and interbank funds transfer.

MegaLink pursues security and risk management initiatives, and reviews its organization and business and IT strategy.'

ATM Industry Association (ATMIA) signs up MegaLink as founding member in the Philippines counting the Philippines as its 50th member country.



Going the Distance

Rural Banks Get Enabled with Wireless ATMs

More ATMs in the countryside? Coming sooner than you think. When ENCASH and PLDT joined forces to deploy the very first wireless ATMs in the Philippines, foundations were laid for a new and revolutionary banking system. Thanks to PLDT SWUP or Shops.Work UnPlugged, banks can now use GPRS/EDGE technology to wirelessly deploy ATMs and manage transactions over a secure, Virtual Private Network (VPN), making it easier and faster to deploy SWUP-powered ATMs and more difficult to hack than those operating on a wired connection. It's no wonder that so many banks are eager to jump on the wireless bandwagon.

Now PLDT Business Solutions, partnered with ENCASH, is taking SWUP technology to the countryside, making it possible for rural banks to maintain their own ATM network. A recent contract signing with 1st Valley Bank, GM Bank, Bangko Kabayan and the Bank of Florida marked a milestone in Philippine microfinance, enabling far-flung regions in the country with accessible ATMs. Banking customers in the province no longer have to worry about commuting to the nearest city to deposit or withdraw money. The convenience of having an ATM in their hometown also eliminates the need for cardholders to withdraw and carry around large amounts of cash. Clearly, when it comes to rural banking, wireless is the way to go.

"Rural Banks have to resolve many technological hurdles when planning for ATM deployment," says Eric J. Severino, President of ENCASH Network Services, "Data communication, or the lack of it, is one. A wireless ATM allows rapid deployment and immediate redirection when the bank decides that the location of the terminal is not suitable."

PLDT and ENCASH will be providing the 4 rural banks with SWUP-enabled ATMs that will be deployed in remote locations such as Arayat, Cuenca, Palayan City and Zaragoza. SWUP technology allows these ATMs to operate within the coverage of over 6,000 cell sites that serve 99.3% of the country's population. This unmatched wireless coverage will enable the 1st Valley Bank, GM Bank, Bangko Kabayan and the Bank of Florida to deploy their ATMs wherever their branches may be, creating more revenue opportunities for rural banks and enterprises alike and bringing state of the art banking convenience to rural clientele.

> " This new system will transform the banking culture in the countryside..."

Enabled With A New Banking System

In the long run, deploying wireless ATMs is about more than creating convenience for rural banking customers. It's about enabling the countryside with the means for sustainable growth. As more and more rural banks opt to SWUP it, it's clear that wireless technology is more than just a trend. It's the catalyst for a change that is long overdue.

"What we're doing today represents something very revolutionary to the banking industry," says Severino, "SWUP brings many real, immediately realizable advantages to the market. It will also introduce change, possibly disrupting the status quo. This is the first banking system of its kind in the country... it will be a great enabler for commerce."

"This new system will transform the banking culture in the countryside," said Eric R. Alberto, PLDT SVP and Head of Corporate Business Group, "There's also a social aspect to it; if we enable this spectrum of the market with first world services, then our economy will move at a faster pace and will soon mimic the more developed economies."

1st Valley Bank President
Nickolas Lim

Bank of Florida President
Teresa David-Carlos

Thanks to PLDT SWUP technology and ENCASH Network Services' infrastructure, rural banks can now deploy wireless ATMs nationwide, regardless of their location.

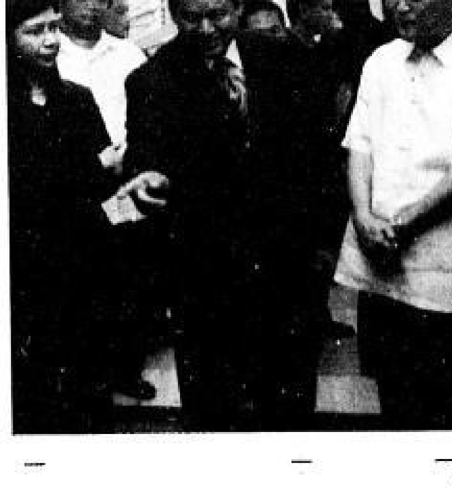
Bangko Kabayan President
Atty. Francis Ganzon

GM Bank President
Mitch Gomez

Standing from L-R: PLDT Corporate Business Group Business Head, Luigi Lopa, 1st Valley Bank President, Nickolas Lim, PLDT FVP and Head of Corporate Business Solutions, Nerisse Ramos, PLDT FVP and CBOO, Cesar Enriquez, Bank of Florida President, Teresa David-Carlos, Bangko Kabayan President, Atty. Francis Ganzon, ENCASH Director Mike Mapa, PLDT SVP and Head of Corporate Business Group, Eric Alberto, ENCASH President Eric Severino, ENCASH Director Raymond Go, and GM Bank President, Mitch Gomez.

◀ ENCASH President Eric Severino and SWUP Product Manager Jun Darjuan explain how ENCASH ATMs use SWUP technology to acccomodate wireless transactions.

PLDT SVP & Head of Corporate Business Group, Eric Alberto, demonstrates the capabilities of a SWUP enabled wireless ATM to Ives Nisce, Rang-Ay Bank President. ▶



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